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The Flight of Betsey Lane

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *A Country Doctor and Selected Stories and Sketches*, by Sarah Orne Jewett

I.

One windy morning in May, three old women sat together near an open window in the shed chamber of Byfleet Poor-house. The wind was from the northwest, but their window faced the southeast, and they were only visited by an occasional pleasant waft of fresh air. They were close together, knee to knee, picking over a bushel of beans, and commanding a view of the dandelion-starred, green yard below, and of the winding, sandy road that led to the village, two miles away. Some captive bees were scolding among the cobwebs of the rafters overhead, or thumping against the upper panes of glass; two calves were bawling from the barnyard, where some of the men were at work loading a dump-cart and shouting as if every one were deaf. There was a cheerful feeling of activity, and even an air of comfort, about the Byfleet Poor-house. Almost every one was possessed of a most interesting past, though there was less to be said about the future. The inmates were by no means distressed or unhappy; many of them retired to this shelter only for the winter season, and would go out presently, some to begin such work as they could still do, others to live in their own small houses; old age had impoverished most of them by limiting their power of endurance; but far from lamenting the fact that they were town charges, they rather liked the change and excitement of a winter residence on the poor-farm. There was a sharp-faced, hard-worked young widow with seven children, who was an exception to the general level of society, because she deplored the change in her fortunes. The older women regarded her with suspicion, and were apt to talk about her in moments like this, when they happened to sit together at their work.

The three bean-pickers were dressed alike in stout brown gingham, checked by a white line, and all wore great faded aprons of blue drilling, with sufficient pockets convenient to the right hand. Miss Peggy Bond was a very small, belligerent-looking person, who wore a huge pair of steel-bowed spectacles, holding her sharp chin well up in air, as if to supplement an inadequate nose. She was more than half blind, but the spectacles seemed to face upward instead of square ahead, as if their wearer were always on the sharp lookout for birds. Miss Bond had suffered much personal damage from time to time, because she never took heed where she planted her feet, and so was always tripping and stubbing her bruised way through the world. She had fallen down hatchways and cellarways, and stepped composedly into deep ditches and pasture brooks; but she was proud of stating that she was upsighted, and so was her father before her. At the poor-house, where

an unusual malady was considered a distinction, uprightness was looked upon as a most honorable infirmity. Plain rheumatism, such as afflicted Aunt Lavina Dow, whose twisted hands found even this light work difficult and tiresome,--plain rheumatism was something of every-day occurrence, and nobody cared to hear about it. Poor Peggy was a meek and friendly soul, who never put herself forward; she was just like other folks, as she always loved to say, but Mrs. Lavina Dow was a different sort of person altogether, of great dignity and, occasionally, almost aggressive behavior. The time had been when she could do a good day's work with anybody: but for many years now she had not left the town-farm, being too badly crippled to work; she had no relations or friends to visit, but from an innate love of authority she could not submit to being one of those who are forgotten by the world. Mrs. Dow was the hostess and social lawgiver here, where she remembered every inmate and every item of interest for nearly forty years, besides an immense amount of town history and biography for three or four generations back.

She was the dear friend of the third woman, Betsey Lane; together they led thought and opinion--chiefly opinion--and held sway, not only over Byfleet Poor-farm, but also the selectmen and all others in authority. Betsey Lane had spent most of her life as aid-in-general to the respected household of old General Thornton. She had been much trusted and valued, and, at the breaking up of that once large and flourishing family, she had been left in good circumstances, what with legacies and her own comfortable savings; but by sad misfortune and lavish generosity everything had been scattered, and after much illness, which ended in a stiffened arm and more uncertainty, the good soul had sensibly decided that it was easier for the whole town to support her than for a part of it. She had always hoped to see something of the world before she died; she came of an adventurous, seafaring stock, but had never made a longer journey than to the towns of Danby and Northville, thirty miles away.

They were all old women; but Betsey Lane, who was sixty-nine, and looked much older, was the youngest. Peggy Bond was far on in the seventies, and Mrs. Dow was at least ten years older. She made a great secret of her years; and as she sometimes spoke of events prior to the Revolution with the assertion of having been an eye-witness, she naturally wore an air of vast antiquity. Her tales were an inexpressible delight to Betsey Lane, who felt younger by twenty years because her friend and comrade was so unconscious of chronological limitations.

The bushel basket of cranberry beans was within easy reach, and each of the pickers had filled her lap from it again and again. The shed chamber was not an unpleasant place in which to sit at work, with its traces of seed corn hanging from the brown cross-beams, its spare churns, and dusty loom, and rickety wool-wheels, and a few bits of old

furniture. In one far corner was a wide board of dismal use and suggestion, and close beside it an old cradle. There was a battered chest of drawers where the keeper of the poor-house kept his garden-seeds, with the withered remains of three seed cucumbers ornamenting the top. Nothing beautiful could be discovered, nothing interesting, but there was something usable and homely about the place. It was the favorite and untroubled bower of the bean-pickers, to which they might retreat unmolested from the public apartments of this rustic institution.

Betsey Lane blew away the chaff from her handful of beans. The spring breeze blew the chaff back again, and sifted it over her face and shoulders. She rubbed it out of her eyes impatiently, and happened to notice old Peggy holding her own handful high, as if it were an oblation, and turning her queer, up-tilted head this way and that, to look at the beans sharply, as if she were first cousin to a hen.

"There, Miss Bond, 'tis kind of botherin' work for you, ain't it?" Betsey inquired compassionately.

"I feel to enjoy it, anything that I can do my own way so," responded Peggy. "I like to do my part. Ain't that old Mis' Fales comin' up the road? It sounds like her step."

The others looked, but they were not far-sighted, and for a moment Peggy had the advantage. Mrs. Fales was not a favorite.

"I hope she ain't comin' here to put up this spring. I guess she won't now, it's gettin' so late," said Betsey Lane. "She likes to go rovin' soon as the roads is settled."

"'Tis Mis' Fales!" said Peggy Bond, listening with solemn anxiety. "There, do let's pray her by!"

"I guess she's headin' for her cousin's folks up Beech Hill way," said Betsey presently. "If she'd left her daughter's this mornin', she'd have got just about as far as this. I kind o' wish she had stepped in just to pass the time o' day, long's she wa'n't going to make no stop."

There was a silence as to further speech in the shed chamber; and even the calves were quiet in the barnyard. The men had all gone away to the field where corn-planting was going on. The beans clicked steadily into the wooden measure at the pickers' feet. Betsey Lane began to sing a hymn, and the others joined in as best they might, like autumnal crickets; their voices were sharp and cracked, with now and then a few low notes of plaintive tone. Betsey herself could sing pretty well, but the others could only make a kind of accompaniment. Their voices ceased altogether at the higher notes.

"Oh my! I wish I had the means to go to the Centennial," mourned Betsey Lane, stopping so suddenly that the others had to go on croaking and shrilling without her for a moment before they could stop. "It seems to me as if I can't die happy 'less I do," she added; "I ain't never seen nothin' of the world, an' here I be."

"What if you was as old as I be?" suggested Mrs. Dow pompously. "You've got time enough yet, Betsey; don't you go an' despair. I knowed of a woman that went clean round the world four times when she was past eighty, an' enjoyed herself real well. Her folks followed the sea; she had three sons an' a daughter married,--all shipmasters, and she'd been with her own husband when they was young. She was left a widder early, and fetched up her family herself,--a real stirrin', smart woman. After they'd got married off, an' settled, an' was doing well, she come to be lonesome; and first she tried to stick it out alone, but she wa'n't one that could; an' she got a notion she hadn't nothin' before her but her last sickness, and she wa'n't a person that enjoyed havin' other folks do for her. So one on her boys--I guess 'twas the oldest--said he was going to take her to sea; there was ample room, an' he was sailin' a good time o' year for the Cape o' Good Hope an' way up to some o' them tea-ports in the Chiny Seas. She was all high to go, but it made a sight o' talk at her age; an' the minister made it a subject o' prayer the last Sunday, and all the folks took a last leave; but she said to some she'd fetch 'em home something real pritty, and so did. An' then they come home t'other way, round the Horn, an' she done so well, an' was such a sight o' company, the other child'n was jealous, an' she promised she'd go a v'y'ge long o' each on 'em. She was as sprightly a person as ever I see; an' could speak well o' what she'd seen."

"Did she die to sea?" asked Peggy, with interest.

"No, she died to home between v'y'ges, or she'd gone to sea again. I was to her funeral. She liked her son George's ship the best; 'twas the one she was going on to Callao. They said the men aboard all called her 'gran'ma'am,' an' she kep' 'em mended up, an' would go below and tend to 'em if they was sick. She might 'a' been alive an' enjoyin' of herself a good many years but for the kick of a cow; 'twas a new cow out of a drove, a dreadful unruly beast."

Mrs. Dow stopped for breath, and reached down for a new supply of beans; her empty apron was gray with soft chaff. Betsey Lane, still pondering on the Centennial, began to sing another verse of her hymn, and again the old women joined her. At this moment some strangers came driving round into the yard from the front of the house. The turf was soft, and our friends did not hear the horses' steps. Their voices cracked and quavered; it was a funny little concert, and a lady in an open carriage just below listened with sympathy and amusement.

II.

"Betsey! Betsey! Miss Lane!" a voice called eagerly at the foot of the stairs that led up from the shed. "Betsey! There's a lady here wants to see you right away."

Betsey was dazed with excitement, like a country child who knows the rare pleasure of being called out of school. "Lor', I ain't fit to go down, be I?" she faltered, looking anxiously at her friends; but Peggy was gazing even nearer to the zenith than usual, in her excited effort to see down into the yard, and Mrs. Dow only nodded somewhat jealously, and said that she guessed 'twas nobody would do her any harm. She rose ponderously, while Betsey hesitated, being, as they would have said, all of a twitter. "It is a lady, certain," Mrs. Dow assured her; "'tain't often there's a lady comes here."

"While there was any of Mis' Gen'ral Thornton's folks left, I wa'n't without visits from the gentry," said Betsey Lane, turning back proudly at the head of the stairs, with a touch of old-world pride and sense of high station. Then she disappeared, and closed the door behind her at the stair-foot with a decision quite unwelcome to the friends above.

"She needn't 'a' been so dreadful 'fraid anybody was goin' to listen. I guess we've got folks to ride an' see us, or had once, if we hain't now," said Miss Peggy Bond, plaintively.

"I expect 't was only the wind shoved it to," said Aunt Lavina. "Betsey is one that gits flustered easier than some. I wish 'twas somebody to take her off an' give her a kind of a good time; she's young to settle down 'long of old folks like us. Betsey's got a notion o' rovin' such as ain't my natur', but I should like to see her satisfied. She'd been a very understandin' person, if she had the advantages that some does."

"'Tis so," said Peggy Bond, tilting her chin high. "I suppose you can't hear nothin' they're saying? I feel my hearin' ain't up to whar it was. I can hear things close to me well as ever; but there, hearin' ain't everything; 'tain't as if we lived where there was more goin' on to hear. Seems to me them folks is stoppin' a good while."

"They surely be," agreed Lavina Dow.

"I expect it's somethin' particular. There ain't none of the Thornton folks left, except one o' the gran'darters, an' I've often heard Betsey remark that she should never see her more, for she lives to London. Strange how folks feels contented in them strayaway places off

to the ends of the airth."

The flies and bees were buzzing against the hot windowpanes; the handfuls of beans were clicking into the brown wooden measure. A bird came and perched on the windowsill, and then flitted away toward the blue sky. Below, in the yard, Betsey Lane stood talking with the lady. She had put her blue drilling apron over her head, and her face was shining with delight.

"Lor', dear," she said, for at least the third time, "I remember ye when I first see ye; an awful pritty baby you was, an' they all said you looked just like the old gen'ral. Be you goin' back to foreign parts right away?"

"Yes, I'm going back; you know that all my children are there. I wish I could take you with me for a visit," said the charming young guest. "I'm going to carry over some of the pictures and furniture from the old house; I didn't care half so much for them when I was younger as I do now. Perhaps next summer we shall all come over for a while. I should like to see my girls and boys playing under the pines."

"I wish you re'lly was livin' to the old place," said Betsey Lane. Her imagination was not swift; she needed time to think over all that was being told her, and she could not fancy the two strange houses across the sea. The old Thornton house was to her mind the most delightful and elegant in the world.

"Is there anything I can do for you?" asked Mrs. Strafford kindly,--"anything that I can do for you myself, before I go away? I shall be writing to you, and sending some pictures of the children, and you must let me know how you are getting on."

"Yes, there is one thing, darlin'. If you could stop in the village an' pick me out a pritty, little, small lookin'-glass, that I can keep for my own an' have to remember you by. 'Tain't that I want to set me above the rest o' the folks, but I was always used to havin' my own when I was to your grandma's. There's very nice folks here, some on 'em, and I'm better off than if I was able to keep house; but sence you ask me, that's the only thing I feel cropin' about. What be you goin' right back for? ain't you goin' to see the great fair to Pheladelphia, that everybody talks about?"

"No," said Mrs. Strafford, laughing at this eager and almost convicting question. "No; I'm going back next week. If I were, I believe that I should take you with me. Good-by, dear old Betsey; you make me feel as if I were a little girl again; you look just the same."

For full five minutes the old woman stood out in the sunshine, dazed

with delight, and majestic with a sense of her own consequence. She held something tight in her hand, without thinking what it might be; but just as the friendly mistress of the poor-farm came out to hear the news, she tucked the roll of money into the bosom of her brown gingham dress. "'Twas my dear Mis' Katy Strafford," she turned to say proudly. "She come way over from London; she's been sick; they thought the voyage would do her good. She said most the first thing she had on her mind was to come an' find me, and see how I was, an' if I was comfortable; an' now she's goin' right back. She's got two splendid houses; an' said how she wished I was there to look after things,--she remembered I was always her gran'ma's right hand. Oh, it does so carry me back, to see her! Seems if all the rest on 'em must be there together to the old house. There, I must go right up an' tell Mis' Dow an' Peggy."

"Dinner's all ready; I was just goin' to blow the horn for the men-folks," said the keeper's wife. "They'll be right down. I expect you've got along smart with them beans,--all three of you together;" but Betsey's mind roved so high and so far at that moment that no achievements of bean-picking could lure it back.

III.

The long table in the great kitchen soon gathered its company of waifs and strays,--creatures of improvidence and misfortune, and the irreparable victims of old age. The dinner was satisfactory, and there was not much delay for conversation. Peggy Bond and Mrs. Dow and Betsey Lane always sat together at one end, with an air of putting the rest of the company below the salt. Betsey was still flushed with excitement; in fact, she could not eat as much as usual, and she looked up from time to time expectantly, as if she were likely to be asked to speak of her guest; but everybody was hungry, and even Mrs. Dow broke in upon some attempted confidences by asking inopportunistly for a second potato. There were nearly twenty at the table, counting the keeper and his wife and two children, noisy little persons who had come from school with the small flock belonging to the poor widow, who sat just opposite our friends. She finished her dinner before any one else, and pushed her chair back; she always helped with the housework,--a thin, sorry, bad-tempered-looking poor soul, whom grief had sharpened instead of softening. "I expect you feel too fine to set with common folks," she said enviously to Betsey.

"Here I be a-settin'," responded Betsey calmly. "I don't know's I behave more unbecomin' than usual." Betsey prided herself upon her good and proper manners; but the rest of the company, who would have liked to hear the bit of morning news, were now defrauded of that pleasure. The wrong note had been struck; there was a silence after the clatter of knives and plates, and one by one the cheerful town

charges disappeared. The bean-picking had been finished, and there was a call for any of the women who felt like planting corn; so Peggy Bond, who could follow the line of hills pretty fairly, and Betsey herself, who was still equal to anybody at that work, and Mrs. Dow, all went out to the field together. Aunt Lavina labored slowly up the yard, carrying a light splint-bottomed kitchen chair and her knitting-work, and sat near the stone wall on a gentle rise, where she could see the pond and the green country, and exchange a word with her friends as they came and went up and down the rows. Betsey vouchsafed a word now and then about Mrs. Strafford, but you would have thought that she had been suddenly elevated to Mrs. Strafford's own cares and the responsibilities attending them, and had little in common with her old associates. Mrs. Dow and Peggy knew well that these high-feeling times never lasted long, and so they waited with as much patience as they could muster. They were by no means without that true tact which is only another word for unselfish sympathy.

The strip of corn land ran along the side of a great field; at the upper end of it was a field-corner thicket of young maples and walnut saplings, the children of a great nut-tree that marked the boundary. Once, when Betsey Lane found herself alone near this shelter at the end of her row, the other planters having lagged behind beyond the rising ground, she looked stealthily about, and then put her hand inside her gown, and for the first time took out the money that Mrs. Strafford had given her. She turned it over and over with an astonished look: there were new bank-bills for a hundred dollars. Betsey gave a funny little shrug of her shoulders, came out of the bushes, and took a step or two on the narrow edge of turf, as if she were going to dance; then she hastily tucked away her treasure, and stepped discreetly down into the soft harrowed and hoed land, and began to drop corn again, five kernels to a hill. She had seen the top of Peggy Bond's head over the knoll, and now Peggy herself came entirely into view, gazing upward to the skies, and stumbling more or less, but counting the corn by touch and twisting her head about anxiously to gain advantage over her uncertain vision. Betsey made a friendly, inarticulate little sound as they passed; she was thinking that somebody said once that Peggy's eyesight might be remedied if she could go to Boston to the hospital; but that was so remote and impossible an undertaking that no one had ever taken the first step. Betsey Lane's brown old face suddenly worked with excitement, but in a moment more she regained her usual firm expression, and spoke carelessly to Peggy as she turned and came alongside.

The high spring wind of the morning had quite fallen; it was a lovely May afternoon. The woods about the field to the northward were full of birds, and the young leaves scarcely hid the solemn shapes of a company of crows that patiently attended the corn-planting. Two of the men had finished their hoeing, and were busy with the construction of a scarecrow; they knelt in the furrows, chuckling, and looking over

some forlorn, discarded garments. It was a time-honored custom to make the scarecrow resemble one of the poor-house family; and this year they intended to have Mrs. Lavina Dow protect the field in effigy; last year it was the counterfeit of Betsey Lane who stood on guard, with an easily recognized quilted hood and the remains of a valued shawl that one of the calves had found airing on a fence and chewed to pieces. Behind the men was the foundation for this rustic attempt at statuary,--an upright stake and bar in the form of a cross. This stood on the highest part of the field; and as the men knelt near it, and the quaint figures of the corn-planters went and came, the scene gave a curious suggestion of foreign life. It was not like New England; the presence of the rude cross appealed strangely to the imagination.

IV.

Life flowed so smoothly, for the most part, at the Byfleet Boor-farm, that nobody knew what to make, later in the summer, of a strange disappearance. All the elder inmates were familiar with illness and death, and the poor pomp of a town-pauper's funeral. The comings and goings and the various misfortunes of those who composed this strange family, related only through its disasters, hardly served for the excitement and talk of a single day. Now that the June days were at their longest, the old people were sure to wake earlier than ever; but one morning, to the astonishment of every one, Betsey Lane's bed was empty; the sheets and blankets, which were her own, and guarded with jealous care, were carefully folded and placed on a chair not too near the window, and Betsey had flown. Nobody had heard her go down the creaking stairs. The kitchen door was unlocked, and the old watchdog lay on the step outside in the early sunshine, wagging his tail and looking wise, as if he were left on guard and meant to keep the fugitive's secret.

"Never knowed her to do nothin' afore 'thout talking it over a fortnight, and paradin' off when we could all see her," ventured a spiteful voice. "Guess we can wait till night to hear 'bout it."

Mrs. Dow looked sorrowful and shook her head. "Betsey had an aunt on her mother's side that went and drown'd of herself; she was a pritty-appearing woman as ever you see."

"Perhaps she's gone to spend the day with Decker's folks," suggested Peggy Bond. "She always takes an extra early start; she was speakin' lately o' going up their way;" but Mrs. Dow shook her head with a most melancholy look. "I'm impressed that something's befell her," she insisted. "I heard her a-groanin' in her sleep. I was wakeful the forepart o' the night,--'tis very unusual with me, too."

"'Twa'n't like Betsey not to leave us any word," said the other old

friend, with more resentment than melancholy. They sat together almost in silence that morning in the shed chamber. Mrs. Dow was sorting and cutting rags, and Peggy braided them into long ropes, to be made into mats at a later date. If they had only known where Betsey Lane had gone, they might have talked about it until dinner-time at noon; but failing this new subject, they could take no interest in any of their old ones. Out in the field the corn was well up, and the men were hoeing. It was a hot morning in the shed chamber, and the woolen rags were dusty and hot to handle.

V.

Byfleet people knew each other well, and when this mysteriously absent person did not return to the town-farm at the end of a week, public interest became much excited; and presently it was ascertained that Betsey Lane was neither making a visit to her friends the Deckers on Birch Hill, nor to any nearer acquaintances; in fact, she had disappeared altogether from her wonted haunts. Nobody remembered to have seen her pass, hers had been such an early flitting; and when somebody thought of her having gone away by train, he was laughed at for forgetting that the earliest morning train from South Byfleet, the nearest station, did not start until long after eight o'clock; and if Betsey had designed to be one of the passengers, she would have started along the road at seven, and been seen and known of all women. There was not a kitchen in that part of Byfleet that did not have windows toward the road. Conversation rarely left the level of the neighborhood gossip: to see Betsey Lane, in her best clothes, at that hour in the morning, would have been the signal for much exercise of imagination; but as day after day went by without news, the curiosity of those who knew her best turned slowly into fear, and at last Peggy Bond again gave utterance to the belief that Betsey had either gone out in the early morning and put an end to her life, or that she had gone to the Centennial. Some of the people at table were moved to loud laughter,--it was at supper-time on a Sunday night,--but others listened with great interest.

"She never'd put on her good clothes to drownd herself," said the widow. "She might have thought 'twas good as takin' 'em with her, though. Old folks has wandered off an' got lost in the woods afore now."

Mrs. Dow and Peggy resented this impertinent remark, but deigned to take no notice of the speaker. "She wouldn't have wore her best clothes to the Centennial, would she?" mildly inquired Peggy, bobbing her head toward the ceiling. "'Twould be a shame to spoil your best things in such a place. An' I don't know of her havin' any money; there's the end o' that."

"You're bad as old Mis' Bland, that used to live neighbor to our folks," said one of the old men. "She was dreadful precise; an' she so begretched to wear a good alapaca dress that was left to her, that it hung in a press forty year, an' baited the moths at last."

"I often seen Mis' Bland a-goin' in to meetin' when I was a young girl," said Peggy Bond approvingly. "She was a good-appearin' woman, an' she left property."

"Wish she'd left it to me, then," said the poor soul opposite, glancing at her pathetic row of children: but it was not good manners at the farm to deplore one's situation, and Mrs. Dow and Peggy only frowned. "Where do you suppose Betsey can be?" said Mrs. Dow, for the twentieth time. "She didn't have no money. I know she ain't gone far, if it's so that she's yet alive. She's b'en real pinched all the spring."

"Perhaps that lady that come one day give her some," the keeper's wife suggested mildly.

"Then Betsey would have told me," said Mrs. Dow, with injured dignity.

VI.

On the morning of her disappearance, Betsey rose even before the pewee and the English sparrow, and dressed herself quietly, though with trembling hands, and stole out of the kitchen door like a plunderless thief. The old dog licked her hand and looked at her anxiously; the tortoise-shell cat rubbed against her best gown, and trotted away up the yard, then she turned anxiously and came after the old woman, following faithfully until she had to be driven back. Betsey was used to long country excursions afoot. She dearly loved the early morning; and finding that there was no dew to trouble her, she began to follow pasture paths and short cuts across the fields, surprising here and there a flock of sleepy sheep, or a startled calf that rustled out from the bushes. The birds were pecking their breakfast from bush and turf; and hardly any of the wild inhabitants of that rural world were enough alarmed by her presence to do more than flutter away if they chanced to be in her path. She stepped along, light-footed and eager as a girl, dressed in her neat old straw bonnet and black gown, and carrying a few belongings in her best bundle-handkerchief, one that her only brother had brought home from the East Indies fifty years before. There was an old crow perched as sentinel on a small, dead pine-tree, where he could warn friends who were pulling up the sprouted corn in a field close by; but he only gave a contemptuous caw as the adventurer appeared, and she shook her bundle at him in revenge, and laughed to see him so clumsy as he tried to keep his footing on the twigs.

"Yes, I be," she assured him. "I'm a-goin' to Pheladelphia, to the Centennial, same's other folks. I'd jest as soon tell ye's not, old crow;" and Betsey laughed aloud in pleased content with herself and her daring, as she walked along. She had only two miles to go to the station at South Byfleet, and she felt for the money now and then, and found it safe enough. She took great pride in the success of her escape, and especially in the long concealment of her wealth. Not a night had passed since Mrs. Strafford's visit that she had not slept with the roll of money under her pillow by night, and buttoned safe inside her dress by day. She knew that everybody would offer advice and even commands about the spending or saving of it; and she brooked no interference.

The last mile of the foot-path to South Byfleet was along the railway track; and Betsey began to feel in haste, though it was still nearly two hours to train time. She looked anxiously forward and back along the rails every few minutes, for fear of being run over; and at last she caught sight of an engine that was apparently coming toward her, and took flight into the woods before she could gather courage to follow the path again. The freight train proved to be at a standstill, waiting at a turnout; and some of the men were straying about, eating their early breakfast comfortably in this time of leisure. As the old woman came up to them, she stopped too, for a moment of rest and conversation.

"Where be ye goin'?" she asked pleasantly; and they told her. It was to the town where she had to change cars and take the great through train; a point of geography which she had learned from evening talks between the men at the farm.

"What'll ye carry me there for?"

"We don't run no passenger cars," said one of the young fellows, laughing. "What makes you in such a hurry?"

"I'm startin' for Pheladelphia, an' it's a gre't ways to go."

"So't is; but you're consid'able early, if you're makin' for the eight-forty train. See here! you haven't got a needle an' thread 'long of you in that bundle, have you? If you'll sew me on a couple o' buttons, I'll give ye a free ride. I'm in a sight o' distress, an' none o' the fellows is provided with as much as a bent pin."

"You poor boy! I'll have you seen to, in half a minute. I'm troubled with a stiff arm, but I'll do the best I can."

The obliging Betsey seated herself stiffly on the slope of the embankment, and found her thread and needle with utmost haste. Two of

the train-men stood by and watched the careful stitches, and even offered her a place as spare brakeman, so that they might keep her near; and Betsey took the offer with considerable seriousness, only thinking it necessary to assure them that she was getting most too old to be out in all weathers. An express went by like an earthquake, and she was presently hoisted on board an empty box-car by two of her new and flattering acquaintances, and found herself before noon at the end of the first stage of her journey, without having spent a cent, and furnished with any amount of thrifty advice. One of the young men, being compassionate of her unprotected state as a traveler, advised her to find out the widow of an uncle of his in Philadelphia, saying despairingly that he couldn't tell her just how to find the house; but Miss Betsey Lane said that she had an English tongue in her head, and should be sure to find whatever she was looking for. This unexpected incident of the freight train was the reason why everybody about the South Byfleet station insisted that no such person had taken passage by the regular train that same morning, and why there were those who persuaded themselves that Miss Betsey Lane was probably lying at the bottom of the poor-farm pond.

VII.

"Land sakes!" said Miss Betsey Lane, as she watched a Turkish person parading by in his red fez, "I call the Centennial somethin' like the day o' judgment! I wish I was goin' to stop a month, but I dare say 'twould be the death o' my poor old bones."

She was leaning against the barrier of a patent pop-corn establishment, which had given her a sudden reminder of home, and of the winter nights when the sharp-kerneled little red and yellow ears were brought out, and Old Uncle Eph Flanders sat by the kitchen stove, and solemnly filled a great wooden chopping-tray for the refreshment of the company. She had wandered and loitered and looked until her eyes and head had grown numb and unreceptive; but it is only unimaginative persons who can be really astonished. The imagination can always outrun the possible and actual sights and sounds of the world; and this plain old body from Byfleet rarely found anything rich and splendid enough to surprise her. She saw the wonders of the West and the splendors of the East with equal calmness and satisfaction; she had always known that there was an amazing world outside the boundaries of Byfleet. There was a piece of paper in her pocket on which was marked, in her clumsy handwriting, "If Betsey Lane should meet with accident, notify the selectmen of Byfleet;" but having made this slight provision for the future, she had thrown herself boldly into the sea of strangers, and then had made the joyful discovery that friends were to be found at every turn.

There was something delightfully companionable about Betsey; she had a

way of suddenly looking up over her big spectacles with a reassuring and expectant smile, as if you were going to speak to her, and you generally did. She must have found out where hundreds of people came from, and whom they had left at home, and what they thought of the great show, as she sat on a bench to rest, or leaned over the railings where free luncheons were afforded by the makers of hot waffles and molasses candy and fried potatoes; and there was not a night when she did not return to her lodgings with a pocket crammed with samples of spool cotton and nobody knows what. She had already collected small presents for almost everybody she knew at home, and she was such a pleasant, beaming old country body, so unmistakably appreciative and interested, that nobody ever thought of wishing that she would move on. Nearly all the busy people of the Exhibition called her either Aunt or Grandma at once, and made little pleasures for her as best they could. She was a delightful contrast to the indifferent, stupid crowd that drifted along, with eyes fixed at the same level, and seeing, even on that level, nothing for fifty feet at a time. "What be you making here, dear?" Betsey Lane would ask joyfully, and the most perfunctory guardian hastened to explain. She squandered money as she had never had the pleasure of doing before, and this hastened the day when she must return to Byfleet. She was always inquiring if there were any spectacle-sellers at hand, and received occasional directions; but it was a difficult place for her to find her way about in, and the very last day of her stay arrived before she found an exhibitor of the desired sort, an oculist and instrument-maker.

"I called to get some specs for a friend that's upsighted," she gravely informed the salesman, to his extreme amusement. "She's dreadful troubled, and jerks her head up like a hen a-drinkin'. She's got a blur a-growin' an' spreadin', an' sometimes she can see out to one side on't, and more times she can't."

"Cataracts," said a middle-aged gentleman at her side; and Betsey Lane turned to regard him with approval and curiosity.

"'Tis Miss Peggy Bond I was mentioning, of Byfleet Poor-farm," she explained. "I count on gettin' some glasses to relieve her trouble, if there's any to be found."

"Glasses won't do her any good," said the stranger. "Suppose you come and sit down on this bench, and tell me all about it. First, where is Byfleet?" and Betsey gave the directions at length.

"I thought so," said the surgeon. "How old is this friend of yours?"

Betsey cleared her throat decisively, and smoothed her gown over her knees as if it were an apron; then she turned to take a good look at her new acquaintance as they sat on the rustic bench together. "Who be you, sir, I should like to know?" she asked, in a friendly tone.

"My name's Dunster."

"I take it you're a doctor," continued Betsey, as if they had overtaken each other walking from Byfleet to South Byfleet on a summer morning.

"I'm a doctor; part of one at least," said he. "I know more or less about eyes; and I spend my summers down on the shore at the mouth of your river; some day I'll come up and look at this person. How old is she?"

"Peggy Bond is one that never tells her age; 'tain't come quite up to where she'll begin to brag of it, you see," explained Betsey reluctantly; "but I know her to be nigh to seventy-six, one way or t'other. Her an' Mrs. Mary Ann Chick was same year's child'n, and Peggy knows I know it, an' two or three times when we've be'n in the buryin'-ground where Mary Ann lays an' has her dates right on her headstone, I couldn't bring Peggy to take no sort o' notice. I will say she makes, at times, a convenience of being upighted. But there, I feel for her,--everybody does; it keeps her stubbin' an' trippin' against everything, beakin' and gazin' up the way she has to."

"Yes, yes," said the doctor, whose eyes were twinkling. "I'll come and look after her, with your town doctor, this summer,--some time in the last of July or first of August."

"You'll find occupation," said Betsey, not without an air of patronage. "Most of us to the Byfleet Farm has got our ails, now I tell ye. You ain't got no bitters that'll take a dozen years right off an ol' lady's shoulders?"

The busy man smiled pleasantly, and shook his head as he went away. "Dunster," said Betsey to herself, soberly committing the new name to her sound memory. "Yes, I mustn't forget to speak of him to the doctor, as he directed. I do' know now as Peggy would vally herself quite so much accordin' to, if she had her eyes fixed same as other folks. I expect there wouldn't been a smarter woman in town, though, if she'd had a proper chance. Now I've done what I set to do for her, I do believe, an' 'twa'n't glasses, neither. I'll git her a pritty little shawl with that money I laid aside. Peggy Bond ain't got a pritty shawl. I always wanted to have a real good time, an' now I'm havin' it."

VIII.

Two or three days later, two pathetic figures might have been seen crossing the slopes of the poor-farm field, toward the low shores of

Byfield pond. It was early in the morning, and the stubble of the lately mown grass was wet with rain and hindering to old feet. Peggy Bond was more blundering and liable to stray in the wrong direction than usual; it was one of the days when she could hardly see at all. Aunt Lavina Dow was unusually clumsy of movement, and stiff in the joints; she had not been so far from the house for three years. The morning breeze filled the gathers of her wide gingham skirt, and aggravated the size of her unwieldy figure. She supported herself with a stick, and trusted beside to the fragile support of Peggy's arm. They were talking together in whispers.

"Oh, my sakes!" exclaimed Peggy, moving her small head from side to side. "Hear you wheeze, Mis' Dow! This may be the death o' you; there, do go slow! You set here on the sidehill, an' le' me go try if I can see."

"It needs more eyesight than you've got," said Mrs. Dow, panting between the words. "Oh! to think how spry I was in my young days, an' here I be now, the full of a door, an' all my complaints so aggravated by my size. 'T is hard! 'tis hard! but I'm a-doin' of all this for pore Betsey's sake. I know they've all laughed, but I look to see her ris' to the top o' the pond this day,--'tis just nine days since she departed; an' say what they may, I know she hove herself in. It run in her family; Betsey had an aunt that done just so, an' she ain't be'n like herself, a-broodin' an' hivin' away alone, an' nothin' to say to you an' me that was always sich good company all together. Somethin' sprung her mind, now I tell ye, Mis' Bond."

"I feel to hope we sha'n't find her, I must say," faltered Peggy. It was plain that Mrs. Dow was the captain of this doleful expedition. "I guess she ain't never thought o' drowndin' of herself, Mis' Dow; she's gone off a-visitin' way over to the other side o' South Byfleet; some thinks she's gone to the Centennial even now!"

"She hadn't no proper means, I tell ye," wheezed Mrs. Dow indignantly; "an' if you prefer that others should find her floatin' to the top this day, instid of us that's her best friends, you can step back to the house."

They walked on in aggrieved silence. Peggy Bond trembled with excitement, but her companion's firm grasp never wavered, and so they came to the narrow, gravelly margin and stood still. Peggy tried in vain to see the glittering water and the pond-lilies that starred it; she knew that they must be there; once, years ago, she had caught fleeting glimpses of them, and she never forgot what she had once seen. The clear blue sky overhead, the dark pine-woods beyond the pond, were all clearly pictured in her mind. "Can't you see nothin'?" she faltered; "I believe I'm wuss'n upsighted this day. I'm going to be blind."

"No," said Lavina Dow solemnly; "no, there ain't nothin' whatever, Peggy. I hope to mercy she ain't"--

"Why, whoever'd expected to find you 'way out here!" exclaimed a brisk and cheerful voice. There stood Betsey Lane herself, close behind them, having just emerged from a thicket of alders that grew close by. She was following the short way homeward from the railroad.

"Why, what's the matter, Mis' Dow? You ain't overdoin', be ye? an' Peggy's all of a flutter. What in the name o' natur' ails ye?"

"There ain't nothin' the matter, as I knows on," responded the leader of this fruitless expedition. "We only thought we'd take a stroll this pleasant mornin'," she added, with sublime self-possession. "Where've you be'n, Betsey Lane?"

"To Pheladelphia, ma'am," said Betsey, looking quite young and gay, and wearing a townish and unfamiliar air that upheld her words. "All ought to go that can; why, you feel's if you'd be'n all round the world. I guess I've got enough to think of and tell ye for the rest o' my days. I've always wanted to go somewheres. I wish you'd be'n there, I do so. I've talked with folks from Chiny an' the back o' Pennsylvany; and I see folks way from Australy that 'peared as well as anybody; an' I see how they made spool cotton, an' sights o' other things; an' I spoke with a doctor that lives down to the beach in the summer, an' he offered to come up 'long in the first of August, an' see what he can do for Peggy's eyesight. There was di'monds there as big as pigeon's eggs; an' I met with Mis' Abby Fletcher from South Byfleet depot; an' there was hogs there that weighed risin' thirteen hunderd"--

"I want to know," said Mrs. Lavina Dow and Peggy Bond, together.

"Well, 'twas a great exper'ence for a person," added Lavina, turning ponderously, in spite of herself, to give a last wistful look at the smiling waters of the pond.

"I don't know how soon I be goin' to settle down," proclaimed the rustic sister of Sindbad. "What's for the good o' one's for the good of all. You just wait till we're setting together up in the old shed chamber! You know, my dear Mis' Katy Strafford give me a han'some present o' money that day she come to see me; and I'd be'n a-dreamin' by night an' day o' seein' that Centennial; and when I come to think on't I felt sure somebody ought to go from this neighborhood, if 'twas only for the good o' the rest; and I thought I'd better be the one. I wa'n't goin' to ask the selec'men neither. I've come back with one-thirty-five in money, and I see everything there, an' I fetched ye all a little somethin'; but I'm full o' dust now, an' pretty nigh beat out. I never see a place more friendly than Pheladelphia; but 't ain't

natural to a Byfleet person to be always walkin' on a level. There, now, Peggy, you take my bundle-handkercher and the basket, and let Mis' Dow sag on to me. I 'll git her along twice as easy."

With this the small elderly company set forth triumphant toward the poor-house, across the wide green field.

Book I

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Memoirs of François René Vicomte de Chateaubriand sometime Ambassador to Engl*, by François René Chateaubriand and Alexander Teixeira de Mattos

Four years ago, on my return from the Holy Land, I purchased near the little village of Aulnay, in the neighbourhood of Sceaux[2] and Châtenay, a small country-house, lying hidden among wooded hills. The sandy and uneven ground attached to this house consisted of a sort of wild orchard, at the end of which was a ravine and a coppice of chestnut-trees. This narrow space seemed to me fitted to contain my long hopes: *_spatio brevi spem longam reseces*[3]._ The trees which I have planted here are thriving. They are still so small that I can shade them by placing myself between them and the sun. One day they will give me shade and protect my old age as I have protected their youth. I have selected them, in so far as I could, from the different climes in which I have wandered; they recall my travels and foster other illusions in my heart.

If ever the Bourbons reascend the throne, I will ask from them no greater reward for my loyalty than that they should make me rich enough to add to my fee-simple the skirts of the surrounding woods: I have grown ambitious, and would wish to expand my walks by a few roods. Knight-errant though I be, I have the sedentary tastes of a monk: I doubt whether, since taking up my abode in this retreat, I have thrice set foot without my boundary. If my pines, my fir-trees, my larches, my cedars ever keep their promise, the Vallée-aux-Loups will become a veritable hermitage. When, on the 20th of February 1694,[4] Voltaire saw the light at Châtenay, what was then the appearance of the hill to which the author of the *_Génie du Christianisme_* was to retire in 1807?

This spot pleases me; it has taken the place of my paternal acres; I have bought it with the price of my dreams and my vigils; I owe the little wilderness of Aulnay to the vast wilderness of Atala; and I have not, in order to acquire this refuge, imitated the American planter and despoiled the Indian of the Two Floridas[5]. I am attached to my trees; I have addressed elegies to them, sonnets, odes. There is not one of

them which I have not tended with my own hands, which I have not rid of the worm attached to its roots, the caterpillar clinging to its leaves; I know them all by their names, as though they were my children: they are my family, I have no other, and I hope to die in their midst.

Here, I have written the _Martyrs_, the _Abencerages_, the _Itinéraire_ and _Moïse_; what shall I do now during these autumn evenings? This 4th day of October 1811, the anniversary of my saint's-day[6] and of my entrance into Jerusalem,[7] tempts me to commence the history of my life. The man who today is endowing France with the empire of the world only so that he may trample her under foot, the man whose genius I admire and whose despotism I abhor, that man surrounds me with his tyranny as it were with a new solitude; but though he may crush the present, the past defies him, and I remain free in all that precedes his glory.

The greater part of my feelings have remained buried in the recesses of my soul, or are displayed in my works only as applied to imaginary beings. To-day, while I still regret, without pursuing, my illusions, I will reascend the acclivity of my happier years: these Memoirs shall be a shrine erected to the clearness of my remembrances.

[Sidenote: My birth and ancestry.]

Let us commence, then, and speak first of my family. This is essential, because the character of my father depended in a great measure upon his position and, in its turn, exercised a great influence upon the nature of my ideas, by determining the manner of my education[8].

*

I am of noble birth. In my opinion I have improved the hazard of my cradle and retained that firmer love of liberty which belongs principally to the aristocracy whose last hour has struck. Aristocracy has three ages: the age of superiority, the age of privilege, the age of vanity; issuing from the first, it degenerates in the second to become extinguished in the third.

He who is curious for information concerning my family may consult Moréri's[9] Dictionary, the different Histories of Brittany by d'Argentré[10], Dom Lobineau[11], Dom Morice, Père Du Paz' _Histoire généalogique de plusieurs maisons illustres de Bretagne_, Toussaint de Saint-Luc, Le Borgne, and lastly Père Anselme's _Histoire des grands officiers de la Couronne_. [12]

My proofs of descent were made out by Chérin[13], for the admission of my sister Lucile as a canoness of the Chapter of the Argentière, whence she was to be transferred to that of Remiremont. They were reproduced for my presentation to Louis XVI., again for my affiliation to the

Order of Malta, and lastly, when my brother was presented to the same unfortunate Louis XVI.

My name was first written "Brien," and then "Briant" and "Briand," following the invasion of French spelling. Guillaume le Breton says "Castrum-Briani." There is not a French name that does not present these literal variations. What is the spelling of Du Guesclin?

About the commencement of the eleventh century, the Briens gave their name to an important Breton castle, and this castle became the burgh of the Barony of Chateaubriand. The Chateaubriand arms at first consisted of fir-cones with the motto, *Je sème l'or.* Geoffrey Baron of Chateaubriand accompanied St Louis to Palestine. He was taken prisoner at the battle of the Mansourah[14], but returned, and his wife Sybil died of joy and surprise at seeing him. St. Louis, in reward for his services, granted to him and his heirs, in lieu of his old arms, an escutcheon gules, strewn with fleur-de-lis or: "*Cui et ejus hæredibus*" a cartulary of the Priory of Bérée bears witness, "*sanctus Ludovicus turn Francorum rex, propter ejus probitatem in armis, flores lilii auri, loco pomorum pini auri, contulit.*"

[Sidenote: My proofs of nobility.]

The Chateaubriands were divided, soon after their origin, into three branches: the first, that of the Barons of Chateaubriand, was the stock of the two others, and commenced in the year 1000 in the person of Thiern, son of Brien, grandson of Alan III., Count or Chief of Brittany; the second was called the Lords[15] of the Roches Baritaut, or of the Lion d'Angers; the third bore the title of Lords[16] of Beaufort.

When the line of the Lords of Beaufort became extinct in the person of Dame Renée, one Christopher II., of a collateral branch of that line, came into possession of the estate of the Guerrande in Morbihan[17]. At this period, the middle of the seventeenth century, great confusion prevailed in the order of the nobility. Names and titles had been usurped. Louis XIV. ordered a visitation, so that each might be reinstated in his rights. Christopher, upon giving proofs of his ancient nobility, was confirmed in his title and in the ownership of his arms, by judgment of the Chamber instituted at Rennes for the reforming of the nobility of Brittany. This judgment was issued on the 16th of September 1669, and ran as follows:

"Judgment of the Chamber instituted by the King for the reforming of the nobility in the Province of Brittany, delivered the 16th of September 1669: between the King's Attorney-General and M. Christophe de Chateaubriand, Sieur de La Guerrande; which declares the said Christophe to issue from an ancient noble house, permits him to take the

quality of knight, and confirms his right to bear arms gules strewn with fleur-de-lys or without number, and this after production by him of his authentic titles, from which it appears, &c, &c. The said judgment signed Malescot."

This judgment declares that Christophe de Chateaubriand de La Guerrande was descended in the direct line from the Chateaubriands, Lords of Beaufort; the Lords of Beaufort were connected through historical evidences with the first Barons of Chateaubriand. The Chateaubriands de Villeneuve, du Plessis and de Combourg were younger branches of the Chateaubriands de La Guerrande, as is proved by the descent of Amaury, brother of Michel, the said Michel being the son of the Christophe de La Guerrande whose descent was confirmed by the above-quoted decree of the reforming of the nobility of 16 September 1669.

After my presentation to Louis XVI., my brother proposed to increase my portion as a younger son by endowing me with some of those benefices known as *bénéfices simples*. There was but one practical means of doing this, since I was a layman and a soldier, and that was to have me received into the Order of Malta. My brother sent my proofs to Malta, and soon after, he presented a petition, in my name, to the Chapter of the Grand Priory of Aquitaine, held at Poitiers, with a view to the appointing of a commission to declare urgency. M. Pontois was at the time archivist, vice-chancellor and genealogist of the Order of Malta at the Priory.

The president of the Chapter was Louis Joseph des Escotais, *bailli*, Grand Prior of Aquitaine, having with him the Bailli de Freslon, the Chevalier de La Laurencie, the Chevalier de Murat, the Chevalier de Lanjamet, the Chevalier de La Bourdonnaye-Montluc and the Chevalier du Bouëtiez. The petition was allowed at the sittings of the 9th, 10th, and 11th of September 1789. It is stated, in the terms of admission of the "Memorial," that I deserved the favour which I solicited "by more than one title," and that "considerations of the greatest weight" made me worthy of the satisfaction which I claimed.

And all this took place after the fall of the Bastille[18], on the eve of the scenes of the 6th of October 1789[19], and of the removal of the Royal Family to Paris. And at its sitting of the 7th of August in this same year 1789, the National Assembly had abolished titles of nobility! How could the knights, the examiners of my proofs, find that I deserved "by more than one title the favour which I solicited" and so forth, I, who was nothing more than a petty sub-lieutenant of Foot, unknown, without credit, interest or fortune?

My brother's eldest son (I add this in 1831 to my original text, written in 1811), the Comte Louis de Chateaubriand, married Mademoiselle d'Orglandes, by whom he had five daughters and one son, the latter called Geoffroy. Christian, Louis' younger brother, the

great-grandson and godson of M. de Malesherbes, to whom he bore a striking resemblance, served with distinction in Spain in 1823 as a captain of the Dragoons of the Guard. He became a Jesuit in Rome. The Jesuits supply the place of solitude in proportion as the latter vanishes from the earth. Christian died recently at Chieri, near Turin: old and ailing as I am, I should have preceded him; but his virtues summoned him to Heaven before me, who have yet many faults to deplore.

In the division of the family patrimony, Christian had received as his share the property of Malesherbes, and Louis the estate of Combours. Christian did not look upon an equal division as just, and on retiring from the world, determined to disburden himself of a property which did not belong to him and restore it to his elder brother.

To judge from my parchments, it would but rest with myself if I inherited the infatuation of my father and brother, and believed myself to represent a younger branch of the Dukes of Brittany, descending from Thiern, grandson of Alan III.

[Sidenote: Royal alliances.]

These Chateaubriands aforesaid had twice mixed their blood with the Blood Royal of England, Geoffrey IV. of Chateaubriand having married as his second wife Agnes of Laval, grand-daughter of the Count of Anjou and of Maud, daughter of Henry I., while Margaret of Lusignan, widow of the King of England and grand-daughter of Louis the Fat[20], married Geoffrey V., twelfth Baron of Chateaubriand. With respect to the Royal House of Spain, we find Brien, a younger brother of the ninth Baron of Chateaubriand, who would seem to have married Joan, daughter of Alphonsus, King of Aragon. It is stated, moreover, in so far as the great families of France are concerned, that Edward of Rohan took Margaret of Chateaubriand to wife; and again that a Croï married Charlotte of Chateaubriand. Tinténac, the victor of the Battle of the Thirty[21], and Du Guesclin, the Constable, allied themselves with our three branches. Tiphaine Du Guesclin, grand-daughter of Bertrand's brother, made over the property of the Plessis-Bertrand to Brien of Chateaubriand, her cousin and heir. In treaties, Chateaubriands are given as sureties for the peace to the Kings of France, to Clisson[22], to the Baron of Vitre. The Dukes of Brittany send records of their assizes to the Chateaubriands. The Chateaubriands become grand officers of the Crown and *_illustres_* in the Court of Nantes; they receive commissions to defend the safety of their province against the English. Brien I. is present at the Battle of Hastings: he was the son of Eudon, Count of Penthievre. Guy of Chateaubriand is one of the lords whom Arthur of Brittany appoints to accompany his son upon his embassy to the Pope in 1309.

I should never come to an end if I finished stating all that of which I intended to give only a brief summary: the note[23] which I have at

last determined to write, from consideration for my two nephews, who doubtless do not hold these bygone trifles as cheaply as I do, will supply the place of my omissions in the text. Still, nowadays we go too much to the other extreme; it has become the custom to declare that one comes of a stock liable to villain service, that one has the honour to be the son of a man bound to the soil. Are these declarations as proud as they are philosophical? Is it not taking the side of the strongest? Are the marquises, the counts, the barons of the present day, who have neither privileges nor furrows, three-fourths of whom are starving, blackening one another, refusing to recognize each other, mutually contesting each other's birth: are these nobles, whose very names are denied them or only allowed with reserve, able to inspire any fear?

For the rest, I ask pardon for being obliged to stoop to this puerile recital, in order to account for my father's dominant passion, which forms the key to the drama of my youth. As for myself, I neither boast nor complain of the old or the new society. If in the first I was the Chevalier or the Vicomte de Chateaubriand, in the second I am François de Chateaubriand: I prefer my name to my title. Monsieur my father would readily, like a certain mighty land-owner of the Middle Ages, have called God "the gentleman on high" and surnamed Nicodemus (the Nicodemus of the Gospels) "a holy gentleman." And now, passing over my immediate progenitor, let us come from Christopher, feudal lord of the Guerrande, descending in the direct line from the Barons of Chateaubriand, to me, François, lord without vassals or money of the Vallée-aux-Loups.

To trace backwards the line of the Chateaubriands, consisting, as it did, of three branches: after the two first had failed, the third, that of the Lords of Beaufort, represented by a branch, the Chateaubriands of the Guerrande, grew poor, as the inevitable result of the law of the land; the eldest sons of the nobility received two-thirds of the property, by virtue of the custom of Brittany, while the younger sons divided among all of them one-third only of the paternal inheritance. The degeneration of the frail stock of the latter worked with a rapidity which became the greater as they married; and as the same distribution into two-thirds and one-third existed in the case of their children, these younger sons of younger sons soon came to dividing a pigeon, a rabbit, a duck or two, and a hound, although they did not cease to be "high knights and mighty lords" of a dove-cote, a toad-pool and a rabbit-warren. In the old noble families we see a number of younger sons; we follow them during two or three generations, and then they disappear, descending gradually to the plough or absorbed by the labouring classes, no man knowing what has become of them.

[Sidenote: My father's family.]

The head in name and blazon of my family at the commencement of

the eighteenth century was Alexis de Chateaubriand, Seigneur de La Guerrande, son of Michel, the said Michel having a brother named Amaury. Michel was the son of the Christophe confirmed in his descent from the Lords of Beaufort and the Barons of Chateaubriand in the judgment above-quoted. Alexis de La Guerrande was a widower and a confirmed drunkard, spent his days in rioting with his maid-servants, and used his most precious family documents as covers for his butter-jars.

Contemporary with this head in name and blazon lived his cousin François, son of Amaury, Michel's younger brother. François, born 19 February 1683, owned the small lordships of the Touches and the Villeneuve. He married, on the 27th of August 1713, Pétronille Claude Lamour, Dame de Lanjégu, by whom he had four sons: François Henri, René (my father), Pierre Seigneur du Plessis and Joseph Seigneur du Parc. My grandfather, François, died 28 March 1729; in my grand-mother, whom I knew in my childhood, lingered a beautiful expression of the eyes, which seemed to smile in the shade of her many years. At the time of her husband's death, she was living in the manor of the Villeneuve, in the neighbourhood of Dinan. My grandmother's whole fortune did not exceed 5,000 livres a year, of which her eldest son took 3,333 livres, leaving 1,666 livres a year to be divided among the three younger sons, of which sum the eldest again first took the largest share.

To crown the misfortune, my grandmother's plans were thwarted by the characters of her sons: the eldest, François Henri, to whom the magnificent heritage of the lordship of the Villeneuve had fallen, refused to marry and became a priest; but instead of seeking the benefices which his name would have procured for him, and with which he could have supported his brothers, prompted by pride and indifference, he asked for nothing. He buried himself in a country vicarage, and was successively Rector of Saint-Launeuc and of Madrignac in the Diocese of Saint-Malo. He had a passion for poetry; I have seen a goodly number of his verses. The jovial character of this sort of high-born Rabelais, the cult of the Muses practised by this Christian priest in his presbytery, aroused no little interest. He gave away all he possessed and died insolvent.

My father's fourth brother, Joseph, went to Paris and shut himself up in a library: every year his younger son's portion of 416 livres was sent to him. He lived unknown amidst his books, occupying himself with historical research. During his life, which was a short one, he wrote to his mother on each first of January: the only sign of existence he ever gave. Strange destiny! There you have my two uncles, one a man of erudition, the other a poet; my elder brother wrote agreeable verse; one of my sisters, Madame de Farcy, had a real talent for poetry; another of my sisters, the Comtesse Lucile, a canoness, might have become known through a few admirable pages; I myself have blackened no little paper. My brother died on the scaffold, my two sisters quitted

a life of pain after languishing in the prisons; my two uncles did not leave enough to pay for the four boards of their coffin; literature has caused my joys and my sorrows, and I do not despair, God willing, of ending my days in the alms-house.

My grandmother, having exhausted her means in doing something for her eldest and her youngest sons, was unable to do anything for the two others, René, my father, and Pierre, my uncle. This family, which had "strewn gold," according to its motto, looked out from its small manor upon the rich abbeys which it had founded and in which its ancestors lay entombed. It had presided over the States of Brittany, by virtue of possessing one of the nine baronies; it had witnessed with its signature the treaties of sovereigns, had served as surety to Clisson, and would not have had sufficient credit to obtain an ensigncy for the heir of its name.

One resource was left to the poor Breton nobles, the Royal Navy. An endeavour was made to use this on behalf of my father; but he must first go to Brest, live there, pay masters, buy his uniform, arms, books, mathematical instruments: how were all these expenses to be met? The brevet applied for to the Minister of Marine was not sent, for want of a protector to solicit its despatch: the Lady of Villeneuve sickened with grief.

It was then that my father gave the first sign of that decision of character for which I have known him. He was about fifteen years of age; observing his mother's distress, he approached the bed on which she lay, and said:

"I will no longer be a burden to you."

Thereupon my grandmother began to weep: I have heard my father describe the scene a score of times.

"René," said she, "what do you wish to do? Till your fields."

"They will not keep us; let me go away."

"Well, then," said the mother, "go where God wills that you should go."

She embraced the child with sobs. That same evening my father left the maternal farm and arrived at Dinan, where one of our kinswomen gave him a letter of recommendation to an inhabitant of Saint-Malo. The orphan adventurer was taken as a volunteer on board an armed schooner, which set sail a few days later.

[Sidenote: My father's career.]

At that time, the little commonwealth of Saint-Malo alone maintained

the honour of the French ensign at sea. The schooner joined the fleet which the Cardinal de Fleury was dispatching to the assistance of Stanislaus, who was besieged at Dantzic by the Russians. There my father landed, and was present at the memorable combat which 1,500 Frenchmen, commanded by the Breton de Bréhan, Comte de Plélo[24], delivered, on the 29th of May 1734, against 40,000 Muscovites under Munich[25]. De Bréhan, diplomatist, warrior and poet, was killed; my father was twice wounded. He returned to France, and embarked once more. Wrecked upon the Spanish coast, he was attacked and stripped by robbers in Galicia, took a passage on board ship to Bayonne, and landed once again beneath the paternal roof. His courage and his orderly conduct had brought him into notice. He went to the West Indies, made money in the colonies, and laid the foundations of a new fortune for his family.

My grandmother entrusted to her son René the care of her son Pierre, M. de Chateaubriand du Plessis[26] whose son, Armand de Chateaubriand, was shot, by order of Bonaparte, on Good Friday[27] 1809. He was one of the last of the French nobles to die for the cause of the monarchy. My father took charge of his brother's fate, although the habit of suffering had endowed him with a sternness of character that lasted through his life. *Non ignara mali* is not always a true saying: unhappiness has its harsh as well as its gentle side.

M. de Chateaubriand was tall and spare; he had an aquiline nose and thin, pale lips; his eyes were deep-set, small, and of a bluish or sea-green color, like the eyes of lions or of the barbarians of olden time. I have never seen an expression like theirs: when inflamed with anger, each flashing pupil seemed to shoot out and strike you like a bullet.

My father was governed by one sole passion, that of his name. His general condition was one of deep sadness, which increased with age, and of a silence from which he issued only in fits of anger. Avaricious in the hope of restoring to his family its pristine splendour, haughty of demeanour with the nobles at the States of Brittany, harsh with his dependants at Combourg, taciturn, despotic and threatening at home, the feeling which the sight of him inspired was one of fear. Had he lived until the Revolution, and had he been younger, he would have played a great part, or got himself massacred in his castle. He was certainly possessed of genius: I have no doubt that, at the head of an administration or an army, he would have been a man out of the ordinary.

He first thought of marriage on returning from America. Born on the 23rd of September 1718, he was thirty-five years of age when, on the 3rd of July 1753, he married Apolline Jeanne Suzanne de Bedée, born 7 April 1726, and daughter of Messire Ange Annibal Comte de Bedée, Seigneur de La Bouëtardais. He took up his residence with her at Saint-Malo, within seven or eight leagues of which both of them had

been born, so that their house commanded the horizon under which they had first seen the light. My maternal grandmother, Marie Anne de Ravenel de Boisteilleul, Dame de Bedée, born at Rennes on the 16th of October 1698, had been brought up at Saint-Cyr during the last years of Madame de Maintenon: her education had left its mark upon her daughters.

My mother was endowed with great wit and intelligence, and with a prodigious imagination; her mind had been formed by the works of Fénelon, Racine, Madame de Sévigné, and stored with anecdotes of the Court of Louis XIV.; she knew the whole of *Cyrus* [28] by heart. Apolline de Bedée was dark, short and ill-favoured, with large features; the elegance of her manners, the vivacity of her temperament, formed a contrast with my father's stiffness and calm. Loving society as much as he loved solitude, as humoursome and animated as he was cold and unimpassioned, she had no tastes but what were opposed to her husband's. The antagonism which she encountered saddened her naturally gay and light-hearted disposition. Obligated to hold her tongue when she would have wished to speak, she made amends to herself by a kind of clamorous melancholy broken with sighs which alone interrupted my father's silent gloom. For piety my mother was an angel.

My mother was brought to bed at Saint-Malo of an eldest son, who died in the cradle and was christened Geoffroy, like almost all the first-born of my family. This son was followed by another and by two daughters, none of whom lived more than a few months.

[Sidenote: My birth and baptism.]

These four children died of an extravasation of blood on the brain. At last my mother bore a third son, who was named Jean-Baptiste: it was he who later married M. de Malesherbes' grand-daughter. After Jean-Baptiste came four daughters: Marie-Anne, Bénigne, Julie and Lucile, all four endowed with rare beauty; the two eldest alone survived the storms of the Revolution. Beauty, that serious trifle, remains when all the rest has passed away. I was the last of the ten children. Probably my four sisters owed their existence to my father's desire to assure the perpetuation of his name through the arrival of a second boy; I resisted, I had an aversion to life.

Here is my baptismal certificate[29]:

"Extract from the civil register of the Commune of Saint-Malo for the year 1768.

"François René de Chateaubriand, son of René de Chateaubriand and of Pauline Jeanne Suzanne de Bedée, his wife, born 4 September 1768, baptized on the following day by us Pierre Henri Nouail, grand-vicar of the Bishop of Saint-Malo.

Godfather, Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand, his brother, and godmother, Françoise-Gertrude de Contades, who sign with the father. Thus signed on the register: Contades de Plouër, Jean-Baptiste de Chateaubriand, Brignon de Chateaubriand, de Chateaubriand, and Nouail, vicar-general[30]."

It will be observed that I have made a mistake in my Works: I say that I was born on the 4th of October[31] and not on the 4th of September; my Christian names are François René and not François Auguste[32].

The house in which my parents were then living at Saint-Malo stands in a dark and narrow street called the Rue des Juifs[33]: it has now been turned into an inn[34]. The room in which my mother was confined overlooks a bare portion of the city wall, and from the windows one can contemplate an endless expanse of sea, which breaks upon the rocks. My god-father, as appears from my baptismal certificate, was my brother, and my godmother the Comtesse de Plouër, daughter of the Marshal de Contades[35]. I was almost dead when I first saw the light. The roaring of the waves, upheaved by a squall which heralded the autumnal equinox, deadened my cries: I have often been told these details; their sadness has never been erased from my memory. A day seldom passes on which, reflecting on what I have been, I do not see again in thought the rock upon which I was born, the room in which my mother inflicted life upon me, the tempest whose sound first lulled me to sleep, the unfortunate brother who gave me a name which I have nearly always dragged through misfortune. Heaven seemed to unite these several circumstances in order to lay within my cradle a symbol of my destiny.

[Illustration: Chateaubriand's birth place at St. Malo.]

On leaving my mother's breast I underwent my first exile: I was banished to Plancoët, a pretty village situated between Dinan, Saint-Malo and Lamballe. My mother's only brother, the Comte de Bedée, had built a house near the village, to which he gave the name of Monchoix. My maternal grand-mother's property stretched from this neighbourhood to the market-town of Courseul, the Curiosolites of Cæsar's Commentaries. My grandmother, since many years a widow, lived with her sister, Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul, in a hamlet divided from Plancoët by a bridge, and known as the Abbaye, from a Benedictine abbey dedicated to Our Lady of Nazareth.

[Sidenote: My nurse's vow.]

My nurse was sterile; another poor Christian took me to her breast. She vowed me to the patron of the hamlet, Our Lady of Nazareth, and promised that I should wear blue and white in her honor for seven years. I had lived but a few hours, and already the weight of years was marked upon my brow. Why did they not let me die? God in His wisdom

granted to the prayer of humbleness and innocence the preservation of a life for which a vain renown was lying in wait.

This vow of the Breton peasant woman is no longer in the spirit of the age: yet nothing can be more touching than the intervention of a Divine Mother coming between Heaven and the child and sharing the terrestrial mother's solicitude.

After three years I was brought back to Saint-Malo. Already seven years had elapsed since my father had recovered the domain of Combourg. He wished to gain possession of the estates where his ancestors had lived and died; and unable to treat for the purchase of the manor of Beaufort, which had passed to the Goyon family, or for the barony of Chateaubriand, which had fallen into the hands of the House of Condé, he turned his attention to Combourg, which is spelt "Combours"[36] in Froissart, and which has been held by various branches of my family through their inter-marriages with the Coëtquens. Combourg served as a defense to Brittany in the Norman and English marches: it was built in 1016 by Junken, Bishop of Dol; the great tower dates to 1100. The Marshal de Duras[37], who held Combourg by right of his wife, Maclovie de Coëtquen, whose mother was a Chateaubriand, came to terms with my father. The Marquis du Hallay[38], an officer in the Mounted Grenadiers of the Royal Guards, perhaps too well known for his valor, is the last of the Coëtquen Chateaubriands: M. du Hallay has a brother. The same Maréchal de Duras, in his quality as our ally, subsequently presented my brother and myself to Louis XVI.

I was intended for the Royal Navy: a distaste for Court life was natural to any Breton, and particularly to my father. This feeling was strengthened in him by the aristocratic character of our States.

When I was brought home to Saint-Malo, my father was at Combourg, my brother at Saint-Brieuc College; my four sisters were living with my mother. All the latter's affections were centered upon her eldest son: not that she did not love her other children, but she showed a blind preference for the young Comte de Combourg. True, I had, as a boy, as the youngest-born, as the "chevalier," as I was called, certain privileges not shared by my sisters; but, upon the upshot, I was left to the care of the servants. Moreover, my mother, full of intelligence and virtue, was largely taken up with social claims and religious duties. The Comtesse de Plouër, my godmother, was her intimate friend; she also saw Maupertuis'[39] family and the Abbé Trublet's[40]. She loved politics, excitement, society: for people talked politics at Saint-Malo like the monks in the Cedron hollow[41]; and she threw herself with ardor into the La Chalotais[42] affair. She would bring home with her a cross humour, an absent-mindedness, a spirit of parsimony, which at first prevented one from recognising her admirable qualities. She was methodical, and showed no method in the management of her children; generous, and appeared avaricious; gentle, yet ever

scolding: my father was the terror of the servants, my mother their scourge.

Such were the dispositions of my parents, whence sprang the earliest feelings of my life. I attached myself to the woman who took care of me, an excellent creature called Villeneuve, whose name I write with a movement of gratitude and with tears in my eyes. Villeneuve was a sort of superintendent of the household; she carried me in her arms, gave me, by stealth, anything she could come across, wiped away my tears, kissed me, pushed me into a corner, took me out, and constantly muttering: "There's one who won't grow up proud, who has a good heart, who does not snub poor people! Here, little fellow," she would stuff me with sugar and wine.

[Sidenote: My sister Lucile.]

Soon my childish affection for Villeneuve was controlled by a worthier friendship. Lucile, my fourth sister, was two years older than I[43]. Neglected as the youngest, she was given none save her sisters' left-off clothes to wear. Imagine a little thin girl, too tall for her age, with loose-jointed arms, shy, speaking with difficulty, and unable to learn a thing; dress her in a frock taken from a child of a different size and shape; confine her chest in a quilted corset the gores of which cut wounds into her ribs; hold up her neck with an iron collar cased in brown velvet; dress her hair back upon the top of her head, fasten it with a cap of black stuff, and you see before you the wretched object that struck my eyes on returning to the paternal roof. No one would have suspected in the puny Lucile the talent and beauty with which she was one day to shine.

She was given me as a plaything; I did not abuse my power; instead of submitting her to my will, I became her defender. She and I were taken every morning to the sisters Couppart, two hunch-backed old women dressed in black, who taught children to read. Lucile read very badly; I still worse. She was scolded; I scratched the sisters' faces; great complaints were carried to my mother. I began to pass for a ne'er-do-well, a rebel, an idler, in short, an ass. These ideas sank into my parents' heads: my father said that all the Chevaliers de Chateaubriand had been hare-hunters, drunkards, and brawlers. My mother sighed and grumbled when she saw the disordered condition of my jacket. Child though I was, my father's remark revolted me; when my mother crowned her remonstrances with a panegyric on my brother, whom she called a Cato, a hero, I felt inclined to do all the ill that they seemed to expect of me.

My writing-master, M. Desprès, who wore a pig-tail, was no more satisfied with me than were my parents; he was eternally making me copy, from a slip in his own writing, the following couplet, which I came to detest, not by reason of any error of construction that it may

contain:

C'est à vous, mon esprit, à qui je veux parler:
Vous avez des défauts que je ne puis celer[44].

He accompanied his reprimands with cuffs in my neck, calling me *_tête d'achôcre_*: did he mean *ἀχὼρ*[45]? I do not know what a *_tête d'achôcre_* is, but I take it to be something frightful.

Saint-Malo is a mere rock. Originally rising from the middle of a salt marsh, it became an island in 709 through an incursion of the sea, which hollowed out the gulf and set Mont Saint-Michel amid the waves. Nowadays the rock of Saint-Malo is attached to the mainland only by a causeway poetically designated as the Sillon, or Furrow. The Sillon is on one side assaulted by the open sea, and on the other washed by the flowing tide, which turns to enter the harbour. In 1730 it was almost entirely destroyed by a storm. At ebb-tide the harbour is dry, displaying on its edge east and north of the sea a beach of the most beautiful sand. It is then possible to walk round my paternal nest. Near and far are strewn rocks, forts, uninhabited islets: the Fort-Royal, the Conchée, Césembre, and the Grand-Bé, where my tomb will be. I unwittingly made a good choice: *_bé_*, in Breton, means tomb.

At the end of the Furrow, a Calvary stands upon a sandy knoll jutting out into the open sea. This knoll is called the Hogue; it is crowned with an old gallows: we used to play puss-in-the-corner between its posts, disputing their possession with the birds of the sea-shore. It was not, however, without a certain sense of fright that we stopped in that place.

There, too, are the Miels, downs on which the sheep used to graze; to the right are meadows below Paramé, the posting-road to Saint-Servan, a Calvary, and wind mills standing on rising ground, like those on Achilles' Tomb at the entrance to the Hellespont.

I reached my seventh year; my mother took me to Plancoët, to be released from my nurse's vow; we stayed at my grandmother's. If ever I have known happiness, it was certainly in that house.

[Sidenote: My grandmother.]

My grandmother lived in the Rue du Hameau-de-l'Abbaye, in a house whose gardens ran terrace-wise into a dale, at the bottom of which was a spring surrounded by willows. Madame de Bedée could no longer walk, but with this exception she suffered from none of the inconveniences attendant upon her age. She was a pleasant old woman, fat, white-haired, neat, with the grand air and fine and noble manners. She wore old-fashioned plaited gowns and a head-dress of black lace fastened under her chin. Her mind was cultivated, her conversation

grave, her mood was serious. She was cared for by her sister, who resembled her only in kind-heartedness. Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul was a little lean person, sprightly, talkative, addicted to raillery. She had been in love with a certain Comte de Trémigon, and the said count, after becoming engaged to her, had broken his promise. My great-aunt had consoled herself by singing her love, for she was poetically inclined. I remember often hearing her hum, in snuffling fashion, with her glasses on her nose, while embroidering double-rowed ruffles for her sister, an apologue commencing:

Un épervier aimait une fauvette
Et, ce dit-on, il en était aimé[46],

which I always thought strange for a sparrow-hawk.

The song ended with this refrain:

Ah! Trémigon, la fable est-elle obscure?
Ture, lure[47].

How many things in this world end, like my aunt's love, in "Derry down!"

My grandmother left the housekeeping to my sister. She dined at eleven o'clock in the morning, took her _siesta_, woke up at one; she was carried down the garden terraces and placed under the willows near the spring, where she sat knitting, surrounded by her sister, her children, and grandchildren. At that time old age was a distinction; nowadays it is an encumbrance. At four o'clock, my grandmother was carried back to her drawing-room; Pierre, the man-servant, set out a card-table; Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul knocked with the tongs against the back of the fire-place, and a few minutes later three other old maids would walk in, who had come from the next house in obedience to my aunt's summons.

These three sisters were called the Demoiselles Vildéneux[48]; they were the daughters of a poor gentleman, and instead of dividing his slender inheritance, they had enjoyed it in common, had never left one another, had never been out of their natal village. They had been intimate with my grandmother since childhood, lived next door to her, and came every day, at the preconcerted signal in the chimney, to make up their friend's party at quadrille. The game began; the good ladies quarrelled; it was the only incident in their lives, the only moment that spoiled the evenness of their temper. At eight o'clock, supper restored their serenity. Often my uncle de Bedée[49], with his son and his three daughters, would be present at my grandmother's supper. The latter would tell a thousand stories of the old days; my uncle, in his turn, would describe the battle of Fontenoy, at which he was present, and crown his boasting with stories which were a little free and which made the worthy spinsters die with laughing. At nine o'clock, supper

over, the servants entered; all went on their knees, and Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul said prayers aloud. At ten o'clock all in the house slept, except my grand-mother, who made her waiting-woman read to her till one in the morning.

This society, which was the first I saw in my life, was also the first to disappear from my eyes. I saw death enter that abode of peace and bliss, making it gradually lonely, closing first one room and then another which were never reopened. I saw my grandmother obliged to forego her quadrille, for want of her accustomed partners; I saw the number of her constant friends diminish until the day came when my grand-mother was the last to fall. She and her sister had promised to call each other so soon as one had preceded the other; they kept their word, and Madame de Bedée survived Mademoiselle de Boisteilleul but a few months. I am perhaps the only man living that knows that these persons existed. Twenty times since that period I have made the same remark; twenty times have societies been formed and dissolved around me. The impossibility of long duration in human relations, the profound forgetfulness that pursues us, the invincible silence that takes possession of our tomb and spreads thence over our house, constantly recall me to the necessity of isolation. Any hand will serve to give us the glass of water which we may need in the fever preceding death. Ah, that it may not be too dear to us! For how can one forsake without despair the hand which he has covered with kisses, and which he would like to hold to his heart for ever?

[Sidenote: The Bedée family.]

The Comte de Bedée's house[50] was a league away from Plancoët, in a high and cheerful position. Everything about it breathed gladness: my uncle's gaiety was inexhaustible. He had three daughters, Caroline, Marie and Flore, and one son, the Comte de La Bouëtardais, a counsellor to the Parliament, all of whom shared his light-heartedness. Monchoix was filled with cousins from the neighbourhood; they made music, danced, hunted, and revealed from morning till night. My aunt, Madame de Bedée[51], who saw my uncle gaily squandering his capital and his income, was very properly vexed; but no one listened to her, and her ill-humour but increased the good-humour of her family, the more so as my aunt herself displayed a number of eccentricities: she always had a great snarling hound lying in her lap, and was followed by a tame boar, which filled the house with its grunts. When I came from my father's house, so sombre and so silent, to this house of noise and merry-making, I felt myself in a genuine paradise. The contrast became more striking when my family were settled in the country: the change from Combourg to Monchoix was a change from the wilderness to the world, from the castle-keep of a mediæval baron to the villa of a Roman prince.

On Ascension Day 1775, I set out from my grandmother's house to

go to Our Lady of Nazareth, accompanied by my mother, my aunt de Boisteilleul, my uncle de Bedée and his children, my nurse, and my foster-brother. I wore a white surtout, white shoes, gloves, and hat, and a blue silk sash. We went up to the Abbaye at ten o'clock in the morning. The convent, which stood by the road-side, derived an appearance of age from a quincunx of elms dating back to John V. of Brittany[52]. The quincunx led to the cemetery; it was only through the region of the tombstones that the Christian could reach the church: it is death which admits to the presence of God.

The monks were already seated in their stalls; the altar was lighted with a multitude of candles; lamps hung from the different arches: Gothic edifices offer successive distances and, as it were, horizons. The bedels met me at the door, in state, and conducted me to the choir. Three seats had been prepared; I sat down upon the middle one, my nurse placed herself on my left, my foster-mother on my right.

The mass commenced; at the Offertory, the celebrant turned to me and read some prayers; after which my white clothes were taken off and hung as an *_ex voto_* beneath a picture of the Virgin. They then dressed me in a violet-coloured frock. The Prior delivered a discourse upon the efficacy of vows; he recalled the history of the Baron of Chateaubriand who had gone to the East with St Louis; he told me that perhaps I, too, should go to Palestine and visit that Virgin of Nazareth to whom I owed my life, thanks to the prayers of the poor, which were always powerful with God. This monk, who told me the history of my family as Dante's grandfather told him the history of his ancestors, might also, like Cacciaguida, have added to it by predicting my exile[53].

Since the Benedictine's exhortation, I always dreamt of the pilgrimage to Jerusalem, and I ended by accomplishing it.

I was consecrated to religion; the wardrobe of my innocence has lain upon its altars: it is not my garments that should today be hung within its temples, but my misfortunes.

I was taken back to Saint-Malo. Saint-Malo is not the Aleth of the *_Notitia Imperii_*: Aleth was better placed by the Romans in what is now the suburb of Saint-Servan, in the military port known as Solidor, at the mouth of the Rance. Facing Aleth was a rock, *_est in conspectu Tenedos_*[54], not the refuge of the perfidious Greeks, but the retreat of Aaron the Hermit[55], who took up his abode on that island in 507, the date of the victory of Clovis over Alaric[56]: one founded a little convent, the other a great monarchy, two edifices both of which have perished.

[Sidenote: Saint-Malo.]

Malo, in Latin Maclovius, Macutus, or Machutes, became Bishop of Aleth

in 541, and, attracted as he was by Aaron's fame, visited him. As chaplain of the hermit's oratory, after the saint's death he raised a cenobitical church, _in prædio Machutis._ Malo's name was given to the island, and subsequently to the town, Maclovium, Maclopolis.

Between St. Malo, first Bishop of Aleth, and Blessed John surnamed "of the Gridiron," who was consecrated in 1140 and built the cathedral, came five-and-forty bishops. Aleth was already almost wholly abandoned, and John of the Gridiron transferred the episcopal see from the Roman to the Breton city which was spreading over Aaron's rock.

Saint-Malo suffered greatly in the wars waged between the Kings of France and England. The Earl of Richmond, later Henry VII. of England, in whom ended the Wars of the Roses, was taken to Saint-Malo. He was handed over by the Duke of Brittany to the ambassadors of Richard, who carried him to London to be put to death. He escaped from his guards, and took refuge in the cathedral, _asylum quod in eâ urbe est inviolatissimum_: the right of sanctuary dated back to the Druids, the first priests of Aaron's isle.

A Bishop of Saint-Malo was one of the three favourites (the others were Arthur de Montauban and Jean Hingant) who killed the unfortunate Giles of Brittany, as may be read in the _Histoire lamentable de Gilles, seigneur de Chateaubriand et de Chantocé prince du sang de France et de Bretagne, étranglé en prison par les ministres du favori, le 24 avril 1450._

There exists a fine capitulation between Henry IV. and Saint-Malo: the city treats as between Power and Power, protects those who have taken refuge within its walls, and retains the right, by an order of Philibert de La Guiche, grand-master of artillery of France, to cast one hundred pieces of cannon. Nothing more closely resembled Venice (failing the sun and the pursuit of the arts) than did this little commonwealth of Saint-Malo in religion, wealth, and prowess at sea. It supported Charles V.'s expedition to Africa and came to the aid of Louis XIII. at the Rochelle. It flew its ensign over all the seas, maintained relations with Mocha, Surat, Pondicherry; a company formed in its midst explored the South Sea.

From the reign of Henry IV. onwards, my native city distinguished itself for its devotion and fidelity to France. The English bombarded it in 1693; on the 29th of November in that year, they launched against it an infernal machine, in the wreck of which I have often disported myself with my play-fellows. They bombarded it again in 1758.

The Malouins lent considerable sums of money to Louis XIV. during the war of 1701; in recognition of this service, he confirmed them in their privilege of guarding their own city, and ordered that the crew of the first ship in the Royal Navy should consist exclusively of sailors

drawn from Saint-Malo and its territory. In 1771, the Malouins repeated their sacrifice and lent thirty millions to Louis XV.

The famous Admiral Anson[57] landed at Cancale in 1758, and burnt Saint-Servan. In Saint-Malo Castle, La Chalotais wrote upon rags, with the aid of a tooth-pick, soot and water, the Memoirs which made so much noise and which nobody remembers. Events efface events; they are but inscriptions traced upon other inscriptions, making pages of palimpsestic history.

Saint-Malo furnished the Royal Navy with its best sailors; the complete roll may be found in a folio volume published in 1682 with the title: Rôle général des officiers, mariniers et matelots de Saint-Malo. There is a Coutume de Saint-Malo, printed in the collection of the Customary-General. The city archives contain a fair number of charters useful to the study of history and maritime law.

Saint-Malo gave birth to Jacques Cartier[58], the French Christopher Columbus, who discovered Canada. At the other extremity of America the Malouins marked out the islands to which they gave their name: Îles Malouins[59]. It is the native city of Duguay-Trouin[60], one of the greatest seamen ever known, and more recently, of Surcouf[61]. The celebrated Mahé de La Bourdonnais[62], Governor of the Isle of France, was born at Saint-Malo, as were La Mettrie[63], Maupertuis, the Abbé Trublet, of whom Voltaire made sport: all this is not bad for an area not so large as that of the Tuileries Gardens.

Far ahead of these smaller literary lights of my birthplace stands the Abbé de Lamennais[64]. Broussais[65] also was born at Saint-Malo, as well as my noble friend, the Comte de La Ferronnays[66].

[Sidenote: The dogs of Saint-Malo.]

Finally, so as to omit nothing, I will mention the mastiffs which formed the garrison of Saint-Malo. They were descended from the famous dogs which were regimental pets under the Gauls, and which, according to Strabo, fought by their masters' side in pitched battles against the Romans. Albertus Magnus, a monk of the Dominican Order, and as serious a writer as the Greek geographer, declares that at Saint-Malo "the safety of this important place was entrusted nightly to the faithful care of certain dogs, which patrolled well and trustily." They were condemned to capital punishment for having had the misfortune inconsiderately to bite a gentleman's legs; which gave rise in our days to the song, Bon voyage: people will laugh at anything. The criminals were imprisoned; one of them refused to take his food from the hands of his keeper, who wept; the noble animal elected to die of hunger: dogs, like men, are punished for their fidelity. In addition to this, the Capitol was, like my own Delos, guarded by dogs, which did not bark when Scipio Africanus came to say his morning prayer.

Saint-Malo is an enclosure of walls of different periods, divided into "great" and "little" walls, which form walks, and is defended besides by a castle of which I have spoken, and which the Duchess Anne fortified with towers, bastions, and moats. Seen from the outside, the island city resembles a granite citadel.

The children's meeting-place is the strand of the open sea, between the Castle and the Fort-Royal; here I was reared, the companion of the waves and winds. One of my earliest delights was to fight with the storms, to play with the waves which retired before me or chased me across the beach. Another diversion was, with the sand on the sea-shore, to build edifices which my play-fellows called "ovens." Since that time I have often seen castles, built for eternity, that have crumbled more swiftly than my sand palaces.

My lot being irrevocably fixed, I was left to pass an idle childhood. A few notions of drawing, English, hydrography and mathematics seemed more than sufficient for the education of a little boy destined beforehand for the rough life of a sailor.

I grew up in my family without lessons. We no longer occupied the house in which I was born: my mother lived in a large house in the Place Saint-Vincent, almost facing the gate which leads to the Sillon. The ragamuffins of the town had become my dearest friends: I filled the yard and the staircases of the house with them. I resembled them in all things: I spoke their language; I had their ways and their walk; I was dressed like them, my clothes were as indecent and undone as theirs; my shirts fell to rags; I had never a pair of stockings but it was full of holes; I shuffled about in shabby shoes, down at heel, falling off my feet at every step; I often lost my hat and sometimes my coat. My face was smudged, scratched, bruised; my hands black. So strange was my appearance that my mother, in the midst of her anger, could not keep from laughing and exclaiming, "How ugly he is!"

Nevertheless I loved, and I have always loved, cleanliness and elegance. At night I tried to mend my rags. Kind Villeneuve and my Lucile assisted in repairing my clothes, to save me from scoldings and punishments; but their patching only served to make my outfit the odder. I was particularly disconsolate when I appeared in tatters among children proud of their new clothes and of their finery.

There was something about my fellow-townsmen that was foreign and suggested Spain. Families from Saint-Malo had settled at Cadiz; families from Cadiz lived at Saint-Malo. Saint-Malo's insular position, its embankment, its architecture, its houses, its tanks, and its granite walls give it a certain resemblance to Cadiz; when I saw the latter town it often reminded me of the former.

Locked up at night in their city under the same key, the Malouins formed but one family. So primitive were the habits of the place, that young women who sent to Paris for their ribbons and muslins were looked upon as worldly creatures from whom their startled acquaintances held aloof. A frailty was a thing unknown: suspicion having fallen upon a certain Comtesse d'Abbeville, the result was a ballad in singing which people crossed themselves. Nevertheless the poet, faithful, in spite of himself, to the troubadour tradition, took sides against the husband, whom he called "a barbarous monster."

On certain days of the year, the townsmen and the country-people met at fairs called "assemblies," which were held upon the islands and forts surrounding Saint-Malo; these were reached on foot when the sea was low, by boat when it was high. The crowd of sailors and peasants; the covered carts; the caravans of horses, donkeys and mules; the concourse of dealers; the tents lining the sea-shore; the processions of monks and brotherhoods winding with their banners and crosses amid the crowd; the rowing and sailing-boats flitting to and fro; the ships entering harbor or heaving anchor in the roads; the salutes of artillery, the pealing of the bells, all combined to fill these gatherings with noise, movement and variety.

[Sidenote: Holidays at Saint-Malo.]

I was the only witness of these holidays who did not share in the general gaiety. I had no money to buy toys and cakes. In order to avoid the scorn attached to ill-fortune, I sat far from the crowd, near those pools of water which the sea keeps up and replenishes in the hollows of the rocks. There I amused myself by watching the flight of the gulls and sea-mews, staring at the blue expanse of sky, gathering shells, listening to the refrain of the waves among the rocks. At night, at home, I was but little happier; I disliked certain dishes: I was forced to eat them. I cast beseeching glances at La France, who cleverly whipped away my plate when my father's head was turned. In the matter of the fire, the same harshness: I was not permitted to go near the chimney. It is a far cry from those severe parents to the spoil-children of to-day.

But if I had troubles unknown to modern children, I had some pleasures also of which they know nothing. The very meaning has been forgotten of those religious and domestic solemnities in which the whole country and the God of that country seemed to rejoice. Christmas, New Year's Day, Twelfth Night, Whitsuntide, Midsummer were prosperous days for me. Possibly the influence of my native rock worked upon my sentiments and studies. In the year 1015 the Malouins vowed to assist "with their hands and means" to build the steeples of the cathedral at Chartres: have I too not labored with my hands to rebuild the stricken spire of the ancient Christian basilica? "The sun," says Père Maunoir, "never shone upon canton where more constant and invariable fidelity to the

true Faith was shown than in Brittany. For thirteen centuries no heresy has stained the tongue which has served as an organ for preaching Jesus Christ, and the man is as yet unborn who has seen a Breton of Brittany preach any religion other than the Catholic."

On the feast-days which I have mentioned, I was taken with my sisters to perform my stations at the various sanctuaries in the town, at St. Aaron's Chapel or the Convent of Victory; my ear was struck by the sweet voices of a hidden choir of women; the harmony of their chant mingled with the roar of the billows. When, in the winter, at the hour of Benediction, the Cathedral was filled by the multitude; when old sailors upon their knees, young women and children read their Hours with lighted tapers in their hands; when the congregation at the Benediction joined in singing the *Tantum Ergo*; when, in the intervals between the hymns, the Christmas squalls dashed against the panes of the Cathedral and shook the arches of the nave which had resounded with the manly tones of Jacques Cartier and Duguay-Trouin, I experienced an extraordinary feeling of religion. I had no need to be told by Villeneuve to fold my hands and invoke God by all the names which my mother had taught me; I saw the heavens opening, the angels offering up our incense and our prayers; I bowed my forehead: it was not yet laden with those cares which weigh upon us so terribly that we are tempted not to raise our heads after bending them at the foot of the altar.

One sailor, the function concluded, would set sail all fortified against the night, while another would return to harbour and turn his steps to the illuminated dome of the church: thus religion and danger were constantly in sight one of the other, and their features were inseparable in my thoughts. I was hardly born before I heard speak of death: in the evening, a man went from street to street with a bell, calling upon Christians to pray for a brother deceased. Scarcely a year passed but vessels went under before my eyes, and as I played upon the beach the sea rolled to my feet the corpses of foreign men who had expired far from their native land. Madame de Chateaubriand said to me, as St. Monica said to her son: *Nihil longe est a Deo.* My education had been entrusted to Providence, which spared me none of its lessons.

[Sidenote: My early love of religion.]

Vowed as I was to the Virgin, I knew and loved my Protectress, whom I confused with my Guardian Angel: her portrait, which had cost my kind Villeneuve a half sou, was fastened with four pins over the head of my bed. I ought to have lived in the times when one said to Mary: "Sweet Lady of Heaven and Earth, Mother of Pity, Fountain of all Good, that carried Jesus Christ in thy precious womb, fair and most sweet Lady, I thank thee and entreat thee."

The first thing I knew by heart was a sailors' hymn, which began:

Je mets ma confiance,
Vierge, en votre secours;
Servez-moi de défense,
Prenez soin de mes jours;
Et quand ma dernière heure
Viendra finir mon sort,
Obtenez que je meure
De la plus sainte mort[67].

I have since heard this hymn sung in a shipwreck. To this day I can repeat these bad rhymes with as much pleasure as Homer's verses. A statue of Our Lady, adorned with a Gothic crown and clad in a robe of blue silk trimmed with a silver fringe, inspires me with more devotion than one of Raphael's Virgins.

If at least that peaceful *Stella maris* had been able to calm my troubled life! But I was doomed to agitation even in my childhood. I was like the Arab's date-tree: scarce had my stem issued from the rock before it was stricken by the wind.

*

I have told how my premature revolt against Lucile's mistresses began my bad reputation: a play-fellow completed it.

My uncle, M. de Chateaubriand du Plessis, lived at Saint-Malo like his brother, and had, like him, four girls and two boys. Of my two cousins, Pierre and Armand, who were my first companions, Pierre became one of the Queen's pages, Armand was sent to college as being destined for the ecclesiastical state. Pierre, his service as a page ended, entered the navy and was drowned off the coast of Africa. Armand, after a long stay at college, left France in 1790, served throughout the emigration, made a score of intrepid descents in a small vessel upon the coast of Brittany, and at last, on Good Friday 1809[68], gave his life for the King on the Plaine de Grenelle, as I have already stated and as I shall repeat once more when I come to relate the catastrophe[69].

Deprived of the society of my two cousins, I made up for it by a new connection. On the second floor of the house in which we lived, resided a gentleman called Gesril, who had a son and two daughters. This son had been brought up differently from myself; a spoilt child, all he did was thought charming. His one pleasure consisted in fighting, and especially in raising quarrels in which he appointed himself referee. He played practical jokes on nursemaids taking children out walking, and nothing was talked of save his pranks, which were transformed into the blackest crimes. The father laughed at everything, and "Joson" was but the more petted for it.

[Sidenote: My friend Gesril.]

Gesril became my intimate friend, and acquired an incredible ascendancy over me: I was his apt pupil, although my character was the entire opposite of his. I liked solitary games, and sought quarrels with nobody: Gesril doted on pleasures and crowds, and revealed in childish squabbles. When some ragamuffin addressed me, Gesril would ask, "Do you allow that?" Thereupon I thought my honour at stake, and struck out at the rash one's eyes; his age and height made no difference. My friend would watch the fight and applaud my courage, but did nothing to assist me. Sometimes he levied an army of all the gutter-snipes he knew, divided his recruits into two bands, and we skirmished on the sands with the aid of stones.

Another game invented by Gesril was still more dangerous. At high-tide, when there was a storm, the waves, beating at the foot of the Castle, on the side of the long beach, would leap to the level of the great towers. Twenty feet above the base of one of these towers ran a granite parapet, narrow, sloping, and slippery, leading to the ravelin which defended the moat. The trick was to seize the moment between two waves and clear the dangerous spot before the surge broke and covered the tower. You saw a mountain of water approach you, roaring as it came, which, if you delayed a minute, must either drag you with it or crush you against the wall. Not one of us refused the venture, but I have seen children turn pale before attempting it.

This inclination to urge others to encounters of which he remained a spectator would lead one to think that, in after life, Gesril did not display great generosity of character; and yet, although on a smaller stage, he succeeded perhaps in surpassing the heroism of Regulus: his glory only needed Rome and Titus Livy. He became a naval officer, and he was taken prisoner in the engagement of Quiberon[70]. When the action was decided, seeing that the English continued to fire upon the Republican troops, Gesril[71] sprang into the sea, swam out to the ships, and told the English to cease fire, informing them of the disaster and of the capitulation of the Emigrants. They tried to save him by throwing a rope to him, and urged him to come on board. "I am a prisoner on parole," he cried, from the midst of the waves, and swam back to land: he was shot with Sombreuil and his companions[72].

Gesril was my first friend; both of us were misunderstood in childhood, and we became intimate through an instinct that told us what we might some day be worth.

Two adventures put an end to this first part of my story, and produced a noteworthy change in the system upon which my education was conducted. We were one Sunday on the beach, in the "fan" of the Porte Saint-Thomas and along the Sillon, where great stakes sunk into the sand protect the walls against the swell of the sea. We would generally climb to the top of these stakes to watch the first waves of the rising

tide flow beneath us. We had taken our places as usual; several little girls were among us small boys. I was the furthest out at sea, having none in front of me save a pretty little thing called Hervine Magon, who was laughing with pleasure and crying with fear. Gesril was at the further end inland.

The tide rose; it was blowing; already the nurses and footmen were crying: "Come down, miss! Come down, sir!" Gesril waited for a big wave, and as it dashed between the stakes, he pushed the child seated next to him. This one fell against another, that against a third; the whole row fell flat like "friars" of cards, but each was saved by his neighbour; the only exception was the little girl at the extreme end of the row, against whom I was upset, with the result that, having no one to support her, she fell off. She was dragged away by the reflux; a thousand cries arose; all the nurses tucked up their skirts and waded into the sea, each catching hold of her brat and giving it a smack. Hervine was fished out, and declared that François had thrown her down. The nurses made a rush for me; I escaped from them, and ran and shut myself in the cellar at home, whither the army of females pursued me. Fortunately my father and mother had gone out Villeneuve valiantly defended the door, and boxed the ears of the enemy's van-guard. The real author of the mischief, Gesril, lent me his aid: climbing to his own floor, with his two sisters he threw pots of water and baked apples at my assailants from the windows. They raised the siege at nightfall; but the news spread through the town, and the nine-year-old Chevalier de Chateaubriand was reputed a monster of iniquity, a survival of those pirates whom St. Aaron had driven from his rock.

The other adventure was this: I went with Gesril to Saint-Servan, the suburb divided from Saint-Malo by the merchant harbor. In order to reach it at low water, you cross certain currents by means of low and narrow stepping-stones, which are covered when the sea rises. The footmen who escorted us had loitered some way behind. At the end of one of these bridges of stones we saw two ship's lads coming in our direction. Gesril said to me: "Are we to let those beggars pass?" and shouted to them: "Into the water, ducks!" Like true salts, refusing to take chaff, they came on; Gesril retreated; and stationing ourselves at one end of the bridge, we caught up some pebbles and threw them at the ship-boys' heads. They rushed upon us, forced us to fall back, armed themselves with pebbles in their turn, and drove us back, fighting, upon our reserves, in other words, our servants. I was not, like Horatius, hit in the eye; but a stone caught me so violently that my left ear was cut in two and hung down upon my shoulder.

[Sidenote: Our dangerous pastimes.]

I did not think of my hurt, but of my return home. When my friend came back from his excursions with a black eye and a torn coat, he was pitied, pampered, coddled, dressed up again; while I, under similar

circumstances, was promptly punished. The wound I had received was dangerous, but La France was unable to persuade me to come indoors, such was my fright. I went and hid on the second floor with Gesril, who bound up my head in a napkin. This napkin set him going: it suggested a mitre to him; he turned me into a bishop and made me sing High Mass with him and his sisters until supper-time. The dignitary of the Church was at last obliged to go downstairs: my heart beat. Taken aback by my face disordered and smeared with blood, my father said not a word; my mother screamed; La France told my piteous case, and tried to excuse me; I was nevertheless rated for it. They dressed my ear, and Monsieur and Madame de Chateaubriand resolved to separate me from Gesril as soon as possible[73].

I am not sure that it was not in this year that the Comte d'Artois[74] visited Saint-Malo: a sham fight was arranged for him in the roads. From the top of the bastion of the powder-magazine I watched the young Prince standing among the crowd on the beach: in his splendour and in my obscurity how many unknown destinies lay hidden! Thus, if my memory do not fail me, Saint-Malo has seen two Kings of France only: Charles IX. and Charles X.

*

There you have the picture of my early childhood. I do not know whether the harsh education I received be sound in principle, but it was adopted by my relations without purpose and as the natural outcome of their temperament. What is certain is that it imbued me with ideas different from those of other men; what is still more certain is that it impressed upon my sentiments a character of melancholy which arose from the habit of suffering acquired in the age of weakness, improvidence and mirth.

Is it suggested that the manner of my bringing-up might have led me to abhor the authors of my being? Not at all: the remembrance of their sternness is almost pleasant to me; I value and honour their great good qualities. When my father died, my comrades in the Navarre Regiment witnessed my regret. From my mother I derive the consolation of my life, since it was she who taught me my religion; I gathered the Christian verities that issued from her mouth, as Pierre de Langres studied at night in church, by the light of the lamp burning before the Blessed Sacrament. Would my intelligence have received a greater development had I been set earlier to my studies? I doubt it: the waves, the winds, the solitude which were my first masters were probably better suited to my native disposition; possibly I owe to those wild tutors virtues which might have remained unknown to me. The truth is that no system of education is in itself to be preferred to any other system: do children love their parents better nowadays when they say *_tu_* and *_toi_* to them and no longer fear them? Gesril was spoilt in the same house in which I was scolded: we have both

been honest men and loving and respectful sons. This thing which you think bad brings out your child's gifts; that other which you think good would stifle those same gifts. What God does is well done: it is Providence that guides us, when it destines us to play a part upon the world's stage.

THE DEVIL BABY AT HULL-HOUSE

By Jane Addams, from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Atlantic Classics, Second Series*, by Various

I

The knowledge of the existence of the Devil Baby burst upon the residents of Hull-House one day when three Italian women, with an excited rush through the door, demanded that he be shown them. No amount of denial convinced them that he was not there, for they knew exactly what he was like, with his cloven hoofs, his pointed ears and diminutive tail; moreover, the Devil Baby had been able to speak as soon as he was born and was most shockingly profane.

The three women were but the forerunners of a veritable multitude; for six weeks the streams of visitors from every part of the city and suburbs to this mythical baby poured in all day long, and so far into the night that the regular activities of the settlement were almost swamped.

The Italian version, with a hundred variations, dealt with a pious Italian girl married to an atheist. Her husband vehemently tore a holy picture from the bedroom wall, saying that he would quite as soon have a devil in the house as that; whereupon the devil incarnated himself in her coming child. As soon as the Devil Baby was born, he ran about the table shaking his finger in deep reproach at his father, who finally caught him and in fear and trembling brought him to Hull-House. When the residents there, in spite of the baby's shocking appearance, wishing to save his soul, took him to church for baptism, they found that the shawl was empty, and the Devil Baby, fleeing from the holy water, ran lightly over the backs of the pews.

The Jewish version, again with variations, was to the effect that the father of six daughters had said before the birth of a seventh child that he would rather have a devil in the house than another girl, whereupon the Devil Baby promptly appeared.

Save for a red automobile which occasionally figured in the story, and a stray cigar which, in some versions, the newborn child snatched from his

father's lips, the tale might have been fashioned a thousand years ago.

Although the visitors to the Devil Baby included people of every degree of prosperity and education,--even physicians and trained nurses who assured us of their scientific interest,--the story constantly demonstrated the power of an old wives' tale among thousands of people in modern society who are living in a corner of their own, their vision fixed, their intelligence held by some iron chain of silent habit. To such primitive people the metaphor apparently is still the very 'stuff of life'; or, rather, no other form of statement reaches them, and the tremendous tonnage of current writing for them has no existence. It was in keeping with their simple habits that the reputed presence of the Devil Baby at Hull-House did not reach the newspapers until the fifth week of his sojourn--after thousands of people had already been informed of his whereabouts by the old method of passing news from mouth to mouth.

During the weeks of excitement it was the old women who really seemed to have come into their own, and perhaps the most significant result of the incident was the reaction of the story upon them. It stirred their minds and memories as with a magic touch; it loosened their tongues and revealed the inner life and thoughts of those who are so often inarticulate. These old women enjoyed a moment of triumph, as if they had made good at last and had come into a region of sanctions and punishments which they understood.

Throughout six weeks, as I went about Hull-House, I would hear a voice at the telephone repeating for the hundredth time that day, 'No, there is no such baby'; 'No, we never had it here'; 'No, he couldn't have seen it for fifty cents'; 'We didn't send it anywhere because we never had it'; 'I don't mean to say that your sister-in-law lied, but there must be some mistake'; 'There is no use getting up an excursion from Milwaukee, for there isn't any Devil Baby at Hull-House'; 'We can't give reduced rates because we are not exhibiting anything'; and so on and on. As I came near the front door, I would catch snatches of arguments that were often acrimonious: 'Why do you let so many people believe it, if it isn't here?' 'We have taken three lines of cars to come, and we have as much right to see it as anybody else'; 'This is a pretty big place, of course you could hide it easy enough'; 'What you saying that for--are you going to raise the price of admission?' We had doubtless struck a case of what the psychologists call the 'contagion of emotion,' added to that 'æsthetic sociability' which impels any one of us to drag the entire household to the window when a procession comes into the street or a rainbow appears in the sky.

But the Devil Baby of course was worth many processions and rainbows, and I will confess that, as the empty show went on day after day, I quite revolted against such a vapid manifestation of an admirable human trait. There was always one exception, however: whenever I heard the

high eager voices of old women, I was irresistibly interested, and left anything I might be doing in order to listen to them.

II

Perhaps my many talks with these aged visitors crystallized thoughts and impressions that I had been receiving through years; or the tale itself may have ignited a fire, as it were, whose light illumined some of my darkest memories of neglected and uncomfortable old age, of old peasant women who had ruthlessly probed into the ugly depths of human nature in themselves and others. Many of them who came to see the Devil Baby had been forced to face tragic human experiences; the powers of brutality and horror had had full scope in their lives, and for years they had had acquaintance with disaster and death. Such old women do not shirk life's misery by feeble idealism, for they are long past the stage of make-believe. They relate without flinching the most hideous experiences. 'My face has had this queer twist for now nearly sixty years; I was ten when it got that way, the night after I saw my father do my mother to death with his knife.' 'Yes, I had fourteen children; only two grew to be men and both of them were killed in the same explosion. I was never sure they brought home the right bodies.' But even the most hideous sorrows which the old women related had apparently subsided into the paler emotion of ineffectual regret, after Memory had long done her work upon them; the old people seemed, in some unaccountable way, to lose all bitterness and resentment against life, or rather they were so completely without it that they must have lost it long since.

Perhaps those women, because they had come to expect nothing more from life and had perforce ceased from grasping and striving, had obtained, if not renunciation, at least that quiet endurance which allows the wounds of the spirit to heal. Through their stored-up habit of acquiescence, they vouchsafed a fleeting glimpse of that translucent wisdom so often embodied in old women, but so difficult to portray. I recall a conversation with one of them, a woman whose fine mind and indomitable spirit I had long admired; I had known her for years, and yet the recital of her sufferings, added to those which the Devil Baby had already induced other women to tell me, pierced me afresh.

'I had eleven children, some born in Bohemia and some born here; nine of them boys; all of the children died when they were little, but my dear Liboucha, you know all about her. She died last winter in the insane asylum. She was only twelve years old when her father, in a fit of delirium tremens, killed himself after he had chased us around the room trying to kill us first. She saw it all; the blood splashed on the wall stayed in her mind the worst; she shivered and shook all that night through, and the next morning she had lost her voice, couldn't speak out loud for terror. After a while her voice came back, although it was

never very natural, and she went to school again. She seemed to do as well as ever and was awful pleased when she got into High School. All the money we had, I earned scrubbing in a public dispensary, although sometimes I got a little more by interpreting for the patients, for I know three languages, one as well as the other. But I was determined that, whatever happened to me, Liboucha was to be educated. My husband's father was a doctor in the old country, and Liboucha was always a clever child. I wouldn't have her live the kind of life I had, with no use for my mind except to make me restless and bitter. I was pretty old and worn out for such hard work, but when I used to see Liboucha on a Sunday morning, ready for church, in her white dress with her long yellow hair braided round her beautiful pale face, lying there in bed as I was,--being brought up a freethinker and needing to rest my aching bones for the next week's work,--I'd feel almost happy, in spite of everything.

'But of course no such peace could last in my life; the second year at High School, Liboucha began to seem different and do strange things. You know the time she wandered away for three days and we were all wild with fright, although a kind woman had taken her in and no harm came to her. I could never be easy after that; she was always gentle, but she was awful sly about running away, and at last I had to send her to the asylum. She stayed there off and on for five years, but I saw her every week of my life and she was always company for me, what with sewing for her, washing and ironing her clothes, cooking little things to take out to her and saving a bit of money to buy fruit for her. At any rate, I had stopped feeling so bitter, and got some comfort out of seeing the one thing that belonged to me on this side of the water, when all of a sudden she died of heart-failure, and they never took the trouble to send for me until the next day.'

She stopped, as if wondering afresh that the Fates could have been so casual, but with a sudden illumination, as if she had been awakened out of the burden and intensity of her restricted personal interests into a consciousness of those larger relations which are, for the most part, so strangely invisible. It was as if the young mother of the grotesque Devil Baby, that victim of wrongdoing on the part of others, had revealed to this tragic woman, much more clearly than soft words had ever done, that the return of a deed of violence upon the head of the innocent is inevitable; as if she had realized that, although she was destined to walk all the days of her life with that piteous multitude who bear the undeserved wrongs of the world, she would walk henceforth with a sense of companionship.

Among the visitors were pitiful old women who, although they had already reconciled themselves to much misery, were still enduring more. 'You might say it's a disgrace to have your son beat you up for the sake of a bit of money you've earned by scrubbing,--your own man is different,--but I haven't the heart to blame the boy for doing what he's

seen all his life; his father forever went wild when the drink was in him and struck me to the very day of his death. The ugliness was born in the boy as the marks of the devil was born in the poor child upstairs.'

This more primitive type embodies the eternal patience of those humble toiling women who through the generations have been held of little value, save as their drudgery ministered to their men. One of them related her habit of going through the pockets of her drunken son every pay-day, and complained that she had never got so little as the night before, only twenty-five cents out of fifteen dollars he had promised for the rent long overdue. 'I had to get that as he lay in the alley before the door; I couldn't pull him in, and the copper who helped him home left as soon as he heard me coming and pretended he didn't see me. I have no food in the house nor coffee to sober him up with. I know perfectly well that you will ask me to eat something here, but if I can't carry it home, I won't take a bite nor a sup. I have never told you so much before. Since one of the nurses said he could be arrested for my nonsupport, I've been awfully close-mouthed. It's the foolish way all the women in our street are talking about the Devil Baby that's loosened my tongue--more shame to me.'

There are those, if possible more piteous still, who have become absolutely helpless and can therefore no longer perform the household services exacted from them. One last wish has been denied them. 'I hoped to go before I became a burden, but it was not to be'; and the long days of unwonted idleness are darkened by the haunting fear that 'they' will come to think the burden too heavy and decide that the poorhouse is 'the best.' Even then there is no word of blame for undutiful children or heedless grandchildren, for apparently all that is petty and transitory falls away from austere old age; the fires are burned out, resentments, hatreds, and even cherished sorrows have become actually unintelligible. It is as if the horrors through which these old people had passed had never existed for them; and, facing death as they are, they seem anxious to speak only such words of groping wisdom as they can command.

This aspect of memory has never been more clearly stated than by Gilbert Murray in his Life of Euripides. He tells us that the aged poet, when he was officially declared to be one of 'the old men of Athens,' said, 'Even yet the age-worn minstrel can turn Memory into song'; and the memory of which he spoke was that of history and tradition, rather than his own. The aged poet turned into song even the hideous story of Medea, transmuting it into 'a beautiful remote song about far-off children who have been slain in legend, children who are now at peace and whose ancient pain has become part mystery and part music. Memory--that Memory who is the mother of the Muses--having done her work upon them.'

The vivid interest of so many old women in the story of the Devil Baby

may have been an unconscious, although powerful, testimony that tragic experiences gradually become dressed in such trappings in order that their spent agony may prove of some use to a world which learns at the hardest; and that the strivings and sufferings of men and women long since dead, their emotions no longer connected with flesh and blood, are thus transmuted into legendary wisdom. The young are forced to heed the warning in such a tale, although for the most part it is so easy for them to disregard the words of the aged. That the old women who came to visit the Devil Baby believed that the story would secure them a hearing at home, was evident, and as they prepared themselves with every detail of it, their old faces shone with a timid satisfaction. Their features, worn and scarred by harsh living, even as effigies built into the floor of an old church become dim and defaced by rough-shod feet, grew poignant and solemn. In the midst of their double bewilderment, both that the younger generation were walking in such strange paths and that no one would listen to them, for one moment there flickered up that last hope of a disappointed life, that it may at least serve as a warning while affording material for exciting narrations.

Sometimes in talking to one of them, who was 'but a hair's breadth this side of the darkness,' one realized that old age has its own expression for the mystic renunciation of the world. The impatience with all non-essentials, the craving to be free from hampering bonds and soft conditions, was perhaps typified in our own generation by Tolstoi's last impetuous journey, the light of his genius for a moment making comprehensible to us that unintelligible impulse of the aged.

Often, in the midst of a conversation, one of these touching old women would quietly express a longing for death, as if it were a natural fulfillment of an inmost desire. Her sincerity and anticipation were so genuine that I would feel abashed in her presence, ashamed to 'cling to this strange thing that shines in the sunlight, and to be sick with love for it.' Such impressions were in their essence transitory, but one result from the hypothetical visit of the Devil Baby to Hull-House will, I think, remain: a realization of the sifting and reconciling power inherent in Memory, itself. The old women, with much to aggravate and little to soften the habitual bodily discomforts of old age, exhibited an emotional serenity so vast and reassuring that I found myself perpetually speculating as to how soon the fleeting and petty emotions which seem so unduly important to us now might be thus transmuted; at what moment we might expect the inconsistencies and perplexities of life to be brought under this appeasing Memory, with its ultimate power to increase the elements of Beauty and Significance and to reduce, if not to eliminate, stupidity and resentment.

III

As our visitors to the Devil Baby came day by day, it was gradually

evident that the simpler women were not moved wholly by curiosity, but that many of them prized the story as a valuable instrument in the business of living.

The legend exhibited all the persistence of one of those tales which have doubtless been preserved through the centuries because of their taming effects upon recalcitrant husbands and fathers. Shamefaced men brought by their women-folk to see the baby but ill-concealed their triumph when there proved to be no such visible sign of retribution for domestic derelictions. On the other hand, numbers of men came by themselves. One group from a neighboring factory, on their 'own time,' offered to pay twenty-five cents, a half-dollar, two dollars apiece to see the child, insisting that it must be at Hull-House because 'the women-folks had seen it.' To my query as to whether they supposed we would exhibit for money a poor little deformed baby, if one had been born in the neighborhood, they replied, 'Sure, why not?' and, 'It teaches a good lesson, too,' they added as an afterthought, or perhaps as a concession to the strange moral standards of a place like Hull-House. All the members of this group of hardworking men, in spite of a certain swagger toward one another and a tendency to bully the derelict showman, wore that hang-dog look betraying the sense of unfair treatment which a man is so apt to feel when his womankind makes an appeal to the supernatural. In their determination to see the child, the men recklessly divulged much more concerning their motives than they had meant to do, and their talk confirmed my impression that such a story may still act as a restraining influence in that sphere of marital conduct, which, next to primitive religion itself, we are told, has always afforded the most fertile field for irrational tabus and savage punishments.

What story more than this could be calculated to secure sympathy for the mother of too many daughters, and contumely for the irritated father? The touch of mysticism, the supernatural sphere in which it was placed, would render a man perfectly helpless.

The story of the Devil Baby, evolved to-day as it might have been centuries before in response to the imperative needs of anxious wives and mothers, recalled the theory that woman first fashioned the fairy-story, that combination of wisdom and romance, in an effort to tame her mate and to make him a better father to her children, until such stories finally became a rude creed for domestic conduct, softening the treatment that men accorded to women.

These first pitiful efforts of women, so wide-spread and powerful that we have not yet escaped their influence, still cast vague shadows upon the vast spaces of life, shadows that are dim and distorted because of their distant origin. They remind us that for thousands of years women had nothing to oppose against unthinkable brutality save 'the charm of words,' no other implement with which to subdue the fiercenesses of the

world about them.

During the weeks that the Devil Baby drew multitudes of visitors to Hull-House, my mind was opened to the fact that new knowledge derived from concrete experience is continually being made available for the guidance of human life; that humble women are still establishing rules of conduct as best they may, to counteract the base temptations of a man's world. Thousands of women, for instance, make it a standard of domestic virtue that a man must not touch his pay envelope, but bring it home unopened to his wife. High praise is contained in the phrase, 'We have been married twenty years and he never once opened his own envelope'; or covert blame in the statement, 'Of course he got to gambling; what can you expect from a man who always opens his own pay?'

The women are so fatalistically certain of this relation of punishment to domestic sin, of reward to domestic virtue, that when they talk about it, as they so constantly did in connection with the Devil Baby, it often sounds as if they were using the words of a widely known ritual. Even the young girls seized upon it as a palpable punishment, to be held over the heads of reckless friends. That the tale was useful was evidenced by many letters similar to the anonymous epistle here given.

'me and my friends we work in talor shop and when we are going home on the roby street car where we get off that car at blue island ave. we will meet some fellows sitting at that street where they drink some beer from pail, they keep look in cars all time and they will wait and see if we will come sometimes we will have to work, but they will wait so long they are tired and they don't care they get rest so long but a girl what works in twine mill saw them talk with us we know her good and she say what youse talk with old drunk man for we shall come to thier dance when it will be they will tell us and we should know all about where to see them that girl she say oh if you will go with them you will get devils baby like some other girls did who we knows, she say Jane Addams she will show one like that in Hull House if you will go down there we shall come sometime and we will see if that is trouth we do not believe her for she is friendly with them old men herself when she go out from her work they will wink to her and say something else to. We will go down and see you and make a lie from what she say.'

IV

The story evidently held some special comfort for hundreds of forlorn women, representatives of that vast horde of the denied and proscribed, who had long found themselves confronted by those mysterious and impersonal wrongs which are apparently nobody's fault but seem to be inherent in the very nature of things.

Because the Devil Baby embodied an undeserved wrong to a poor mother,

whose tender child had been claimed by the forces of evil, his merely reputed presence had power to attract to Hull-House hundreds of women who had been humbled and disgraced by their children; mothers of the feeble-minded, of the vicious, of the criminal, of the prostitute. In their talk it was as if their long rôle of maternal apology and protective reticence had at last broken down; as if they could speak out freely because for once a man responsible for an ill-begotten child had been 'met up with' and had received his deserts. Their sinister version of the story was that the father of the Devil Baby had married without confessing a hideous crime committed years before, thus basely deceiving both his innocent young bride and the good priest who performed the solemn ceremony; that the sin had become incarnate in his child, which, to the horror of the young and trusting mother, had been born with all the outward aspects of the devil himself.

As if drawn by a magnet, week after week, a procession of forlorn women in search of the Devil Baby came to Hull-House from every part of the city, issuing forth from the many homes in which dwelt 'the two unprofitable goddesses, Poverty and Impossibility.' With an understanding that was quickened perhaps by my own acquaintance with the mysterious child, I listened to many tragic tales from the visiting women: of premature births, 'because he kicked me in the side'; of children maimed and burned, because 'I had no one to leave them with when I went to work.' These women had seen the tender flesh of growing little bodies given over to death because 'he wouldn't let me send for the doctor,' or because 'there was no money to pay for the medicine.' But even these mothers, rendered childless through insensate brutality, were less pitiful than some of the others, who might well have cried aloud of their children as did a distracted mother of her child centuries ago,--

That God should send this one thing more
Of hunger and of dread, a door
Set wide to every wind of pain!

Such was the mother of a feeble-minded boy who said, 'I didn't have a devil baby myself, but I bore a poor "innocent," who made me fight devils for twenty-three years.' She told of her son's experiences, from the time the other little boys had put him up to stealing that they might hide in safety and leave him to be found with 'the goods' on him, until, grown into a huge man, he fell into the hands of professional burglars; he was evidently the dupe and stool-pigeon of the vicious and criminal until the very day he was locked into the State Penitentiary. 'If people played with him a little, he went right off and did anything they told him to, and now he's been sent up for life. We call such innocents "God's Fools" in the old country, but over here the Devil himself gets them. I've fought off bad men and boys from the poor lamb with my very fists; nobody ever came near the house except such like and the police officers who were always arresting him.'

There were a goodly number of visitors, of the type of those to be found in every large city, who are on the verge of nervous collapse or who exhibit many symptoms of mental aberration and yet are sufficiently normal to be at large most of the time and to support themselves by drudgery which requires little mental effort, although the exhaustion resulting from the work they are able to do is the one thing from which they should be most carefully protected. One such woman, evidently obtaining inscrutable comfort from the story of the Devil Baby even after she had become convinced that we harbored no such creature, came many times to tell of her longing for her son who had joined the army some eighteen months before and was stationed in Alaska. She always began with the same words. 'When spring comes and the snow melts so that I know he could get out, I can hardly stand it. You know I was once in the Insane Asylum for three years at a stretch, and since then I haven't had much use of my mind except to worry with. Of course I know that it is dangerous for me, but what can I do? I think something like this: "The snow is melting, now he could get out, but his officers won't let him off, and if he runs away he'll be shot for a deserter--either way I'll never see him again; I'll die without seeing him"--and then I begin all over again with the snow.' After a pause, she said, 'The recruiting officer ought not to have taken him; he's my only son and I'm a widow; it's against the rules, but he was so crazy to go that I guess he lied a little. At any rate, the government has him now and I can't get him back. Without this worry about him, my mind would be all right; if he was here he would be earning money and keeping me and we would be happy all day long.'

Recalling the vagabondish lad who had never earned much money and had certainly never 'kept' his hard-working mother, I ventured to suggest that, even if he were at home, he might not have worked these hard times, that he might get into trouble and be arrested,--I did not need to remind her that he had already been arrested twice,--that he was now fed and sheltered and under discipline, and I added hopefully something about seeing the world. She looked at me out of her withdrawn harried eyes, as if I were speaking a foreign tongue. 'That wouldn't make any real difference to me--the work, the money, his behaving well and all that, if I could cook and wash for him; I don't need all the money I earn scrubbing that factory; I only take bread and tea for supper, and I choke over that, thinking of him.'

V

A sorrowful woman clad in heavy black, who came one day, exhibited such a capacity for prolonged weeping that it was evidence in itself of the truth of at least half her statement, that she had cried herself to sleep every night of her life for fourteen years in fulfillment of a 'curse' laid upon her by an angry man that 'her pillow would be wet with

tears as long as she lived.' Her respectable husband had kept a shop in the Red Light district, because he found it profitable to sell to the men and women who lived there. She had kept house in the rooms 'over the store,' from the time she was a bride newly come from Russia, and her five daughters had been born there, but never a son to gladden her husband's heart.

She took such a feverish interest in the Devil Baby that when I was obliged to disillusion her, I found it hard to take away her comfort in the belief that the Powers that Be are on the side of the woman, when her husband resents too many daughters. But, after all, the birth of daughters was but an incident in her tale of unmitigated woe, for the scoldings of a disappointed husband were as nothing to the curse of a strange enemy, although she doubtless had a confused impression that if there was retribution for one in the general scheme of things, there might be for the other.

When the weeping woman finally put the events of her disordered life in some sort of sequence, it was clear that about fifteen years ago she had reported to the police a vicious house whose back door opened into her own yard. Her husband had forbidden her to do anything about it and had said that it would only get them into trouble; but she had been made desperate one day when she saw her little girl, then twelve years old, come out of the door, gleefully showing her younger sister a present of money. Because the poor woman had tried for ten years, without success, to induce her husband to move from the vicinity of such houses, she was certain that she could save her child only by forcing out 'the bad people' from her own door-yard. She therefore made her one frantic effort, found her way to the city hall, and there reported the house to the chief himself. Of course, 'the bad people' 'stood in with the police,' and nothing happened to them except, perhaps, a fresh levy of blackmail; but the keeper of the house, beside himself with rage, made the dire threat and laid the curse upon her. In less than a year from that time he had enticed her daughter into a disreputable house in another part of the district. The poor woman, ringing one doorbell after another, had never been able to find her; but the girl's sisters, who in time came to know where she was, had been dazzled by her mode of life. The weeping mother was quite sure that two of her daughters, while still outwardly respectable and 'working downtown,' earned money in the devious ways which they had learned all about when they were little children, although for the past five years the now prosperous husband had allowed the family to live in a suburb where the two younger daughters were 'growing up respectable.'

At moments it seemed possible that these simple women, representing an earlier development, eagerly seized upon the story simply because it was primitive in form and substance. Certainly one evening a long-forgotten ballad made an unceasing effort to come to the surface of my mind, as I talked to a feeble woman who, in the last stages of an incurable disease

from which she soon afterwards died, had been helped off the street-car in front of Hull-House.

The ballad tells that the lover of a proud and jealous mistress, who demanded as a final test of devotion that he bring her the heart of his mother, had quickly cut the heart from his mother's breast and impetuously returned to his lady bearing it upon a salver; but that, when stumbling in his gallant haste, he stooped to replace upon the silver plate his mother's heart which had rolled upon the ground, the heart, still beating with tender solicitude, whispered the hope that her child was not hurt.

The ballad itself was scarcely more exaggerated than the story of our visitor that evening, who had made the desperate effort of a journey from home in order to see the Devil Baby. I was familiar with her vicissitudes: the shiftless drinking husband and the large family of children, all of whom had brought her sorrow and disgrace; and I knew that her heart's desire was to see again before she died her youngest son, who was a life prisoner in the penitentiary. She was confident that the last piteous stage of her disease would secure him a week's parole, founding this forlorn hope upon the fact that 'they sometimes let them out to attend a mother's funeral, and perhaps they'd let Joe come a few days ahead; he could pay his fare afterwards from the insurance money. It wouldn't take much to bury me.'

Again we went over the hideous story. Joe had violently quarreled with a woman, the proprietor of the house in which his disreputable wife lived, because she withheld from him a part of his wife's 'earnings,' and in the altercation had killed her--a situation, one would say, which it would be difficult for even a mother to condone. But not at all: her thin gray face worked with emotion, her trembling hands restlessly pulled at her shabby skirt as the hands of the dying pluck at the sheets, but she put all the vitality she could muster into his defense. She told us he had legally married the girl who supported him, 'although Lily had been so long in that life that few men would have done it. Of course such a girl must have a protector or everybody would fleece her; poor Lily said to the day of her death that he was the kindest man she ever knew, and treated her the whitest; that she herself was to blame for the murder because she told on the old miser, and Joe was so hot-headed she might have known that he would draw a gun for her.' The gasping mother concluded, 'He was always that handsome and had such a way. One winter when I was scrubbing in an office-building, I'd never get home much before twelve o'clock; but Joe would open the door for me just as pleasant as if he hadn't been waked out of a sound sleep.'

She was so triumphantly unconscious of the incongruity of a sturdy son in bed while his mother earned his food, that her auditors said never a word, and in silence we saw a hero evolved before our eyes: a defender of the oppressed, the best beloved of his mother, who was losing his

high spirits and eating his heart out behind prison bars. He could well defy the world even there, surrounded as he was by that invincible affection which assures both the fortunate and unfortunate alike that we are loved, not according to our deserts, but in response to some profounder law.

This imposing revelation of maternal solicitude was an instance of what continually happened in connection with the Devil Baby. In the midst of the most tragic recitals there remained that something in the souls of these mothers which has been called the great revelation of tragedy, or sometimes the great illusion of tragedy--that which has power in its own right to make life acceptable and at rare moments even beautiful.

At least, during the weeks when the Devil Baby seemed to occupy every room in Hull-House, one was conscious that all human vicissitudes are in the end melted down into reminiscence, and that a metaphorical statement of those profound experiences which are implicit in human nature itself, however crude in form the story may be, has a singular power of healing the distracted spirit.

If it has always been the mission of literature to translate the particular act into something of the universal, to reduce the element of crude pain in the isolated experience by bringing to the sufferer a realization that his is but the common lot, this mission may have been performed by such stories as this for simple hard-working women, who, after all, at any given moment compose the bulk of the women in the world.

MAN ABOUT TOWN

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *The Four Million*, by O. Henry

There were two or three things that I wanted to know. I do not care about a mystery. So I began to inquire.

It took me two weeks to find out what women carry in dress suit cases. And then I began to ask why a mattress is made in two pieces. This serious query was at first received with suspicion because it sounded like a conundrum. I was at last assured that its double form of construction was designed to make lighter the burden of woman, who makes up beds. I was so foolish as to persist, begging to know why, then, they were not made in two equal pieces; whereupon I was shunned.

The third draught that I craved from the fount of knowledge was enlightenment concerning the character known as A Man About Town. He was more vague in my mind than a type should be. We must have a concrete idea of anything, even if it be an imaginary idea, before we can

comprehend it. Now, I have a mental picture of John Doe that is as clear as a steel engraving. His eyes are weak blue; he wears a brown vest and a shiny black serge coat. He stands always in the sunshine chewing something; and he keeps half-shutting his pocket knife and opening it again with his thumb. And, if the Man Higher Up is ever found, take my assurance for it, he will be a large, pale man with blue wristlets showing under his cuffs, and he will be sitting to have his shoes polished within sound of a bowling alley, and there will be somewhere about him turquoises.

But the canvas of my imagination, when it came to limning the Man About Town, was blank. I fancied that he had a detachable sneer (like the smile of the Cheshire cat) and attached cuffs; and that was all. Whereupon I asked a newspaper reporter about him.

"Why," said he, "a 'Man About Town' something between a 'rounder' and a 'clubman.' He isn't exactly--well, he fits in between Mrs. Fish's receptions and private boxing bouts. He doesn't--well, he doesn't belong either to the Lotos Club or to the Jerry McGeogheghan Galvanised Iron Workers' Apprentices' Left Hook Chowder Association. I don't exactly know how to describe him to you. You'll see him everywhere there's anything doing. Yes, I suppose he's a type. Dress clothes every evening; knows the ropes; calls every policeman and waiter in town by their first names. No; he never travels with the hydrogen derivatives. You generally see him alone or with another man."

My friend the reporter left me, and I wandered further afield. By this time the 3126 electric lights on the Rialto were alight. People passed, but they held me not. Paphian eyes rayed upon me, and left me unscathed. Diners, heimgangers, shop-girls, confidence men, panhandlers, actors, highwaymen, millionaires and outlanders hurried, skipped, strolled, sneaked, swaggered and scurried by me; but I took no note of them. I knew them all; I had read their hearts; they had served. I wanted my Man About Town. He was a type, and to drop him would be an error--a typograph--but no! let us continue.

Let us continue with a moral digression. To see a family reading the Sunday paper gratifies. The sections have been separated. Papa is earnestly scanning the page that pictures the young lady exercising before an open window, and bending--but there, there! Mamma is interested in trying to guess the missing letters in the word N_w Yo_k. The oldest girls are eagerly perusing the financial reports, for a certain young man remarked last Sunday night that he had taken a flyer in Q., X. & Z. Willie, the eighteen-year-old son, who attends the New York public school, is absorbed in the weekly article describing how to make over an old skirt, for he hopes to take a prize in sewing on graduation day.

Grandma is holding to the comic supplement with a two-hours' grip; and

little Tottie, the baby, is rocking along the best she can with the real estate transfers. This view is intended to be reassuring, for it is desirable that a few lines of this story be skipped. For it introduces strong drink.

I went into a café to--and while it was being mixed I asked the man who grabs up your hot Scotch spoon as soon as you lay it down what he understood by the term, epithet, description, designation, characterisation or appellation, viz.: a "Man About Town."

"Why," said he, carefully, "it means a fly guy that's wise to the all-night push--see? It's a hot sport that you can't bump to the rail anywhere between the Flatirons--see? I guess that's about what it means."

I thanked him and departed.

On the sidewalk a Salvation lassie shook her contribution receptacle gently against my waistcoat pocket.

"Would you mind telling me," I asked her, "if you ever meet with the character commonly denominated as 'A Man About Town' during your daily wanderings?"

"I think I know whom you mean," she answered, with a gentle smile. "We see them in the same places night after night. They are the devil's body guard, and if the soldiers of any army are as faithful as they are, their commanders are well served. We go among them, diverting a few pennies from their wickedness to the Lord's service."

She shook the box again and I dropped a dime into it.

In front of a glittering hotel a friend of mine, a critic, was climbing from a cab. He seemed at leisure; and I put my question to him. He answered me conscientiously, as I was sure he would.

"There is a type of 'Man About Town' in New York," he answered. "The term is quite familiar to me, but I don't think I was ever called upon to define the character before. It would be difficult to point you out an exact specimen. I would say, offhand, that it is a man who had a hopeless case of the peculiar New York disease of wanting to see and know. At 6 o'clock each day life begins with him. He follows rigidly the conventions of dress and manners; but in the business of poking his nose into places where he does not belong he could give pointers to a civet cat or a jackdaw. He is the man who has chased Bohemia about the town from rathskeller to roof garden and from Hester street to Harlem until you can't find a place in the city where they don't cut their spaghetti with a knife. Your 'Man About Town' has done that. He is always on the scent of something new. He is curiosity, impudence and omnipresence.

Hansoms were made for him, and gold-banded cigars; and the curse of music at dinner. There are not so many of him; but his minority report is adopted everywhere.

"I'm glad you brought up the subject; I've felt the influence of this nocturnal blight upon our city, but I never thought to analyse it before. I can see now that your 'Man About Town' should have been classified long ago. In his wake spring up wine agents and cloak models; and the orchestra plays 'Let's All Go Up to Maud's' for him, by request, instead of Händel. He makes his rounds every evening; while you and I see the elephant once a week. When the cigar store is raided, he winks at the officer, familiar with his ground, and walks away immune, while you and I search among the Presidents for names, and among the stars for addresses to give the desk sergeant."

My friend, the critic, paused to acquire breath for fresh eloquence. I seized my advantage.

"You have classified him," I cried with joy. "You have painted his portrait in the gallery of city types. But I must meet one face to face. I must study the Man About Town at first hand. Where shall I find him? How shall I know him?"

Without seeming to hear me, the critic went on. And his cab-driver was waiting for his fare, too.

"He is the sublimated essence of Butt-in; the refined, intrinsic extract of Rubber; the concentrated, purified, irrefutable, unavoidable spirit of Curiosity and Inquisitiveness. A new sensation is the breath in his nostrils; when his experience is exhausted he explores new fields with the indefatigability of a--"

"Excuse me," I interrupted, "but can you produce one of this type? It is a new thing to me. I must study it. I will search the town over until I find one. Its habitat must be here on Broadway."

"I am about to dine here," said my friend. "Come inside, and if there is a Man About Town present I will point him out to you. I know most of the regular patrons here."

"I am not dining yet," I said to him. "You will excuse me. I am going to find my Man About Town this night if I have to rake New York from the Battery to Little Coney Island."

I left the hotel and walked down Broadway. The pursuit of my type gave a pleasant savour of life and interest to the air I breathed. I was glad to be in a city so great, so complex and diversified. Leisurely and with something of an air I strolled along with my heart expanding at the thought that I was a citizen of great Gotham, a sharer in its

magnificence and pleasures, a partaker in its glory and prestige.

I turned to cross the street. I heard something buzz like a bee, and then I took a long, pleasant ride with Santos-Dumont.

When I opened my eyes I remembered a smell of gasoline, and I said aloud: "Hasn't it passed yet?"

A hospital nurse laid a hand that was not particularly soft upon my brow that was not at all fevered. A young doctor came along, grinned, and handed me a morning newspaper.

"Want to see how it happened?" he asked cheerily. I read the article. Its headlines began where I heard the buzzing leave off the night before. It closed with these lines:

"--Bellevue Hospital, where it was said that his injuries were not serious. He appeared to be a typical Man About Town."

THE HEIR OF MARK TWAIN

The Project Gutenberg eBook, *Prejudices, First Series*, by H. L. (Henry Louis) Mencken

Nothing could be stranger than the current celebrity of Irvin S. Cobb, an author of whom almost as much is heard as if he were a new Thackeray or Molière. One is solemnly told by various extravagant partisans, some of them not otherwise insane, that he is at once the successor to Mark Twain and the heir of Edgar Allan Poe. One hears of public dinners given in devotion to his genius, of public presentations, of learned degrees conferred upon him by universities, of other extraordinary adulations, few of them shared by such relatively puny fellows as Howells and Dreiser. His talents and sagacity pass into popular anecdotes; he has sedulous Boswells; he begins to take on the august importance of an actor-manager. Behind the scenes, of course, a highly dexterous publisher pulls the strings, but much of it is undoubtedly more or less sincere; men pledge their sacred honor to the doctrine that his existence honors the national literature. Moreover, he seems to take the thing somewhat seriously himself. He gives his *_imprimatur_* to various other authors, including Joseph Conrad; he engages himself to lift the literary tone of moving-pictures; he lends his name to movements; he exposes himself in the chautauquas; he takes on the responsibilities of a patriot and a public man.... Altogether, a curious, and, in some of its aspects, a caressingly ironical spectacle. One wonders what the graduate sophomores of to-morrow, composing their dull tomes upon American letters, will make of it....

In the actual books of the man I can find nothing that seems to justify so much enthusiasm, nor even the hundredth part of it. His serious fiction shows a certain undoubted facility, but there are at least forty other Americans who do the thing quite as well. His public bulls and ukases are no more than clever journalism—superficial and inconsequential, first saying one thing and then quite another thing. And in his humor, which his admirers apparently put first among his products, I can discover, at best, nothing save a somewhat familiar aptitude for grotesque anecdote, and, at worst, only the laborious laugh-squeezing of Bill Nye. In the volume called “Those Times and These” there is an excellent comic story, to wit, “Hark, From the Tomb!” But it would surely be an imbecility to call it a masterpiece; too many other authors have done things quite as good; more than a few (I need cite only George Ade, Owen Johnson and Ring W. Lardner) have done things very much better. Worse, it lies in the book like a slice of Smithfield ham between two slabs of stale store-bread. On both sides of it are very stupid artificialities—stories without point, stories in which rustic characters try to talk like Wilson Mizner, stories altogether machine-made and depressing. Turn, now, to another book, vastly praised in its year—by name, “Cobb’s Anatomy.” One laughs occasionally—but precisely as one laughs over a comic supplement or the jokes in _Ayer’s Almanac_. For example:

There never was a hansom cab made that would hold a fat man comfortably unless he left the doors open, and that makes him feel undressed.

Again:

Your hair gives you bother so long as you have it and more bother when it starts to go. You are always doing something for it and it is always showing deep-dyed ingratitude in return; or else the dye isn’t deep enough, which is even worse.

Exactly; it is even worse. And then this:

Once there was a manicure lady who wouldn’t take a tip, but she is now no more. Her indignant sisters stabbed her to death with hatpins and nail-files.

I do not think I quote unfairly; I have tried to select honest specimens of the author’s fancy.... Perhaps it may be well to glance at another book. I choose, at random, “Speaking of Operations—,” a work described by the publisher as “the funniest yet written by Cobb” and “the funniest book we know of.” In this judgment many other persons seem to have concurred. The thing was an undoubted success when it appeared as an article in the _Saturday Evening Post_ and it sold thousands of copies between covers. Well, what is in it? In it, after a diligent reading, I find half a dozen mildly clever observations—and sixty odd pages of

ancient and infantile wheezes, as flat to the taste as so many crystals of hyposulphite of soda. For example, the wheeze to the effect that in the days of the author's nonage "germs had not been invented yet." For example, the wheeze to the effect that doctors bury their mistakes. For example, the wheeze to the effect that the old-time doctor always prescribed medicines of abominably evil flavor.... But let us go into the volume more in detail, and so unearth all its gems.

On page 1, in the very first paragraph, there is the doddering old joke about the steepness of doctors' bills. In the second paragraph there is the somewhat newer but still fully adult joke about the extreme willingness of persons who have been butchered by surgeons to talk about it afterward. These two witticisms are all that I can find on page 1. For the rest, it consists almost entirely of a reference to MM. Bryan and Roosevelt—a reference well known by all newspaper paragraphists and vaudeville monologists to be as provocative of laughter as a mention of bunions, mothers-in-law or Pottstown, Pa. On page 2 Bryan and Roosevelt are succeeded by certain heavy stuff in the Petroleum V. Nasby manner upon the condition of obstetrics, pediatrics and the allied sciences among whales. Page 3 starts off with the old jocosity to the effect that people talk too much about the weather. It progresses or resolves, as the musicians say, into the wheeze to the effect that people like to dispute over what is the best thing to eat for breakfast. On page 4 we come to what musicians would call the formal statement of the main theme—that is, of the how-I-like-to-talk-of-my-operation motif. We have thus covered four pages.

Page 5 starts out with an enharmonic change: to wit, from the idea that ex-patients like to talk of their operations to the idea that patients in being like to swap symptoms. Following this there is a repetition of the gold theme—that is, the theme of the doctor's bill. On page 6 there are two chuckles. One springs out of a reference to "light housekeeping," a phrase which invariably strikes an American vaudeville audience as salaciously whimsical. The other is grounded upon the well-known desire of baseball fans to cut the umpire's throat. On page 6 there enters for the first time what may be called the second theme of the book. This is the whiskers motif. The whole of this page, with the exception of a sentence embodying the old wheeze about the happy times before germs were invented, is given over to variations of the whiskers joke. Page 8 continues this development section. Whiskers of various fantastic varieties are mentioned—trellis whiskers, bosky whiskers, ambush whiskers, loose, luxuriant whiskers, landscaped whiskers, whiskers that are winter quarters for pathogenic organisms. Some hard, hard squeezing, and the humor in whiskers is temporarily exhausted. Page 8 closes with the old joke about the cruel thumping which doctors perform upon their patients' clavicles.

Now for page 9. It opens with a third statement of the gold motif—"He then took my temperature and \$15." Following comes the dentist's office

motif—that is, the motif of reluctance, of oozing courage, of flight. At the bottom of the page the gold motif is repeated in the key of E minor. Pages 10 and 11 are devoted to simple description, with very little effort at humor. On page 12 there is a second statement, for the full brass choir, of the dentist's office motif. On page 13 there are more echoes from Petroleum V. Nasby, the subject this time being a man "who got his spleen back from the doctor's and now keeps it in a bottle of alcohol." On page 14 one finds the innocent bystander joke; on page 15 the joke about the terrifying effects of reading a patent medicine almanac. Also, at the bottom of the page, there is a third statement of the dentist's office joke. On page 16 it gives way to a restatement of the whiskers theme, in augmentation, which in turn yields to the third or fifth restatement of the gold theme.

Let us now jump a few pages. On page 19 we come to the old joke about the talkative barber; on page 22 to the joke about the book agent; on the same page to the joke about the fashionableness of appendicitis; on page 23 to the joke about the clumsy carver who projects the turkey's gizzard into the visiting pastor's eye; on page 28 to a restatement of the barber joke; on page 31 to another statement—is it the fifth or sixth?—of the dentist's office joke; on page 37 to the katzenjammer joke; on page 39 to the old joke about doctors burying their mistakes.... And so on. And so on and so on. And so on and so on and so on. On pages 48 and 49 there is a perfect riot of old jokes, including the nth variation of the whiskers joke and a fearful and wonderful pun about Belgian hares and heirs....

On second thoughts I go no further.... This, remember, is the book that Cobb's publishers, apparently with his own *Nihil Obstat*, choose as his best. This is the official masterpiece of the "new Mark Twain." Nevertheless, even so laboriously flabby a farceur has his moments. I turn to Frank J. Wiltach's Dictionary of Similes and find this credited to him: "No more privacy than a goldfish." Here, at last, is something genuinely humorous. Here, moreover, is something apparently new.

THE STAR-SPANGLED BANNER.

O! say, can you see, by the dawn's early light,
What so proudly we hailed at the twilight's last gleaming--
Whose broad stripes and bright stars, through the perilous fight,
O'er the ramparts we watched were so gallantly streaming!
And the rocket's red glare, the bombs bursting in air,
Gave proof through the night that our flag was still there;
O! say, does that star-spangled banner yet wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave?

On that shore dimly seen through the mists of the deep,

Where the foe's haughty host in dread silence reposes,
What is that which the breeze, o'er the towering steep,
As it fitfully blows, now conceals, now discloses?
Now it catches the gleam of the morning's first beam,
In full glory reflected now shines on the stream;
'Tis the star-spangled banner; O long may it wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave!

And where is that band who so vauntingly swore
That the havoc of war and the battle's confusion
A home and a country should leave us no more?
Their blood has washed out their foul footsteps, pollution.
No refuge could save the hireling and slave
From the terror of flight, or the gloom of the grave;
And the star-spangled banner in triumph doth wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

O! thus be it ever, when freemen shall stand
Between their loved homes and the war's desolation!
Blest with victory and peace, may the heav'n-rescued land
Praise the power that hath made and preserved us a nation.
Then conquer we must, for our cause it is just,
And this be our motto--"In God is our trust":
And the star-spangled banner in triumph shall wave
O'er the land of the free, and the home of the brave.

FRANCIS SCOTT KEY.

From

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Prairie*, by J. Fenimore Cooper

The geological formation of that portion of the American Union, which lies between the Alleghanies and the Rocky Mountains, has given rise to many ingenious theories. Virtually, the whole of this immense region is a plain. For a distance extending nearly 1500 miles east and west, and 600 north and south, there is scarcely an elevation worthy to be called a mountain. Even hills are not common; though a good deal of the face of the country has more or less of that "rolling" character, which is described in the opening pages of this work.

There is much reason to believe, that the territory which now composes Ohio, Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, and a large portion of the country west of the Mississippi, lay formerly under water. The soil of all the former states has the appearance of an alluvial deposit; and isolated

rocks have been found, of a nature and in situations which render it difficult to refute the opinion that they have been transferred to their present beds by floating ice. This theory assumes that the Great Lakes were the deep pools of one immense body of fresh water, which lay too low to be drained by the irruption that laid bare the land.

It will be remembered that the French, when masters of the Canadas and Louisiana, claimed the whole of the territory in question. Their hunters and advanced troops held the first communications with the savage occupants, and the earliest written accounts we possess of these vast regions, are from the pens of their missionaries. Many French words have, consequently, become of local use in this quarter of America, and not a few names given in that language have been perpetuated. When the adventurers, who first penetrated these wilds, met, in the centre of the forests, immense plains, covered with rich verdure or rank grasses, they naturally gave them the appellation of meadows. As the English succeeded the French, and found a peculiarity of nature, differing from all they had yet seen on the continent, already distinguished by a word that did not express any thing in their own language, they left these natural meadows in possession of their title of convention. In this manner has the word "Prairie" been adopted into the English tongue.

The American prairies are of two kinds. Those which lie east of the Mississippi are comparatively small, are exceedingly fertile, and are always surrounded by forests. They are susceptible of high cultivation, and are fast becoming settled. They abound in Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, and Indiana. They labour under the disadvantages of a scarcity of wood and water,--evils of a serious character, until art has had time to supply the deficiencies of nature. As coal is said to abound in all that region, and wells are generally successful, the enterprise of the emigrants is gradually prevailing against these difficulties.

The second description of these natural meadows lies west of the Mississippi, at a distance of a few hundred miles from that river, and is called the Great Prairies. They resemble the steppes of Tartary more than any other known portion of Christendom; being, in fact, a vast country, incapable of sustaining a dense population, in the absence of the two great necessities already named. Rivers abound, it is true; but this region is nearly destitute of brooks and the smaller water courses, which tend so much to comfort and fertility.

The origin and date of the Great American Prairies form one of nature's most majestic mysteries. The general character of the United States, of the Canadas, and of Mexico, is that of luxuriant fertility. It would be difficult to find another portion of the world, of the same extent, which has so little useless land as the inhabited parts of the American Union. Most of the mountains are arable, and even the prairies, in this section of the republic, are of deep alluvion. The same is true between the Rocky Mountains and the Pacific. Between the two lies the broad

belt, of comparative desert, which is the scene of this tale, appearing to interpose a barrier to the progress of the American people westward.

The Great Prairies appear to be the final gathering place of the red men. The remnants of the Mohicans, and the Delawares, of the Creeks, Choctaws, and Cherokees, are destined to fulfil their time on these vast plains. The entire number of the Indians, within the Union, is differently computed, at between one and three hundred thousand souls. Most of them inhabit the country west of the Mississippi. At the period of the tale, they dwelt in open hostility; national feuds passing from generation to generation. The power of the republic has done much to restore peace to these wild scenes, and it is now possible to travel in security, where civilised man did not dare to pass unprotected five-and-twenty years ago.

The reader, who has perused the two former works, of which this is the natural successor, will recognise an old acquaintance in the principal character of the story. We have here brought him to his end, and we trust he will be permitted to slumber in the peace of the just.

J. F. Cooper Paris June 1832

THE BUFFALO

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of *The Oregon Trail*, by Francis Parkman, Jr.

Four days on the Platte, and yet no buffalo! Last year's signs of them were provokingly abundant; and wood being extremely scarce, we found an admirable substitute in bois de vache, which burns exactly like peat, producing no unpleasant effects. The wagons one morning had left the camp; Shaw and I were already on horseback, but Henry Chatillon still sat cross-legged by the dead embers of the fire, playing pensively with the lock of his rifle, while his sturdy Wyandotte pony stood quietly behind him, looking over his head. At last he got up, patted the neck of the pony (whom, from an exaggerated appreciation of his merits, he had christened "Five Hundred Dollar"), and then mounted with a melancholy air.

"What is it, Henry?"

"Ah, I feel lonesome; I never been here before; but I see away yonder over the buttes, and down there on the prairie, black--all black with buffalo!"

In the afternoon he and I left the party in search of an antelope; until at the distance of a mile or two on the right, the tall white wagons and the little black specks of horsemen were just visible, so slowly

advancing that they seemed motionless; and far on the left rose the broken line of scorched, desolate sand-hills. The vast plain waved with tall rank grass that swept our horses' bellies; it swayed to and fro in billows with the light breeze, and far and near antelope and wolves were moving through it, the hairy backs of the latter alternately appearing and disappearing as they bounded awkwardly along; while the antelope, with the simple curiosity peculiar to them, would often approach as closely, their little horns and white throats just visible above the grass tops, as they gazed eagerly at us with their round black eyes.

I dismounted, and amused myself with firing at the wolves. Henry attentively scrutinized the surrounding landscape; at length he gave a shout, and called on me to mount again, pointing in the direction of the sand-hills. A mile and a half from us, two minute black specks slowly traversed the face of one of the bare glaring declivities, and disappeared behind the summit. "Let us go!" cried Henry, belaboring the sides of Five Hundred Dollar; and I following in his wake, we galloped rapidly through the rank grass toward the base of the hills.

From one of their openings descended a deep ravine, widening as it issued on the prairie. We entered it, and galloping up, in a moment were surrounded by the bleak sand-hills. Half of their steep sides were bare; the rest were scantily clothed with clumps of grass, and various uncouth plants, conspicuous among which appeared the reptile-like prickly-pear. They were gashed with numberless ravines; and as the sky had suddenly darkened, and a cold gusty wind arisen, the strange shrubs and the dreary hills looked doubly wild and desolate. But Henry's face was all eagerness. He tore off a little hair from the piece of buffalo robe under his saddle, and threw it up, to show the course of the wind. It blew directly before us. The game were therefore to windward, and it was necessary to make our best speed to get around them.

We scrambled from this ravine, and galloping away through the hollows, soon found another, winding like a snake among the hills, and so deep that it completely concealed us. We rode up the bottom of it, glancing through the shrubbery at its edge, till Henry abruptly jerked his rein, and slid out of his saddle. Full a quarter of a mile distant, on the outline of the farthest hill, a long procession of buffalo were walking, in Indian file, with the utmost gravity and deliberation; then more appeared, clambering from a hollow not far off, and ascending, one behind the other, the grassy slope of another hill; then a shaggy head and a pair of short broken horns appeared issuing out of a ravine close at hand, and with a slow, stately step, one by one, the enormous brutes came into view, taking their way across the valley, wholly unconscious of an enemy. In a moment Henry was worming his way, lying flat on the ground, through grass and prickly-pears, toward his unsuspecting victims. He had with him both my rifle and his own. He was soon out of sight, and still the buffalo kept issuing into the valley. For a long time all was silent. I sat holding his horse, and wondering what he was

about, when suddenly, in rapid succession, came the sharp reports of the two rifles, and the whole line of buffalo, quickening their pace into a clumsy trot, gradually disappeared over the ridge of the hill. Henry rose to his feet, and stood looking after them.

“You have missed them,” said I.

“Yes,” said Henry; “let us go.” He descended into the ravine, loaded the rifles, and mounted his horse.

We rode up the hill after the buffalo. The herd was out of sight when we reached the top, but lying on the grass not far off, was one quite lifeless, and another violently struggling in the death agony.

“You see I miss him!” remarked Henry. He had fired from a distance of more than a hundred and fifty yards, and both balls had passed through the lungs--the true mark in shooting buffalo.

The darkness increased, and a driving storm came on. Tying our horses to the horns of the victims, Henry began the bloody work of dissection, slashing away with the science of a connoisseur, while I vainly endeavored to imitate him. Old Hendrick recoiled with horror and indignation when I endeavored to tie the meat to the strings of raw hide, always carried for this purpose, dangling at the back of the saddle. After some difficulty we overcame his scruples; and heavily burdened with the more eligible portions of the buffalo, we set out on our return. Scarcely had we emerged from the labyrinth of gorges and ravines, and issued upon the open prairie, when the pricking sleet came driving, gust upon gust, directly in our faces. It was strangely dark, though wanting still an hour of sunset. The freezing storm soon penetrated to the skin, but the uneasy trot of our heavy-gaited horses kept us warm enough, as we forced them unwillingly in the teeth of the sleet and rain, by the powerful suasion of our Indian whips. The prairie in this place was hard and level. A flourishing colony of prairie dogs had burrowed into it in every direction, and the little mounds of fresh earth around their holes were about as numerous as the hills in a cornfield; but not a yelp was to be heard; not the nose of a single citizen was visible; all had retired to the depths of their burrows, and we envied them their dry and comfortable habitations. An hour's hard riding showed us our tent dimly looming through the storm, one side puffed out by the force of the wind, and the other collapsed in proportion, while the disconsolate horses stood shivering close around, and the wind kept up a dismal whistling in the boughs of three old half-dead trees above. Shaw, like a patriarch, sat on his saddle in the entrance, with a pipe in his mouth, and his arms folded, contemplating, with cool satisfaction, the piles of meat that we flung on the ground before him. A dark and dreary night succeeded; but the sun rose with heat so sultry and languid that the captain excused himself on that account from waylaying an old buffalo bull, who with stupid gravity was

walking over the prairie to drink at the river. So much for the climate of the Platte!

But it was not the weather alone that had produced this sudden abatement of the sportsmanlike zeal which the captain had always professed. He had been out on the afternoon before, together with several members of his party; but their hunting was attended with no other result than the loss of one of their best horses, severely injured by Sorel, in vainly chasing a wounded bull. The captain, whose ideas of hard riding were all derived from transatlantic sources, expressed the utmost amazement at the feats of Sorel, who went leaping ravines, and dashing at full speed up and down the sides of precipitous hills, lashing his horse with the recklessness of a Rocky Mountain rider. Unfortunately for the poor animal he was the property of R., against whom Sorel entertained an unbounded aversion. The captain himself, it seemed, had also attempted to “run” a buffalo, but though a good and practiced horseman, he had soon given over the attempt, being astonished and utterly disgusted at the nature of the ground he was required to ride over.

Nothing unusual occurred on that day; but on the following morning Henry Chatillon, looking over the oceanlike expanse, saw near the foot of the distant hills something that looked like a band of buffalo. He was not sure, he said, but at all events, if they were buffalo, there was a fine chance for a race. Shaw and I at once determined to try the speed of our horses.

“Come, captain; we’ll see which can ride hardest, a Yankee or an Irishman.”

But the captain maintained a grave and austere countenance. He mounted his led horse, however, though very slowly; and we set out at a trot. The game appeared about three miles distant. As we proceeded the captain made various remarks of doubt and indecision; and at length declared he would have nothing to do with such a breakneck business; protesting that he had ridden plenty of steeple-chases in his day, but he never knew what riding was till he found himself behind a band of buffalo day before yesterday. “I am convinced,” said the captain, “that, ‘running’ is out of the question.* Take my advice now and don’t attempt it. It’s dangerous, and of no use at all.”

*The method of hunting called “running” consists in attacking the buffalo on horseback and shooting him with bullets or arrows when at full-speed. In “approaching,” the hunter conceals himself and crawls on the ground toward the game, or lies in wait to kill them.

“Then why did you come out with us? What do you mean to do?”

“I shall ‘approach,’” replied the captain.

“You don’t mean to ‘approach’ with your pistols, do you? We have all of us left our rifles in the wagons.”

The captain seemed staggered at the suggestion. In his characteristic indecision, at setting out, pistols, rifles, “running” and “approaching” were mingled in an inextricable medley in his brain. He trotted on in silence between us for a while; but at length he dropped behind and slowly walked his horse back to rejoin the party. Shaw and I kept on; when lo! as we advanced, the band of buffalo were transformed into certain clumps of tall bushes, dotting the prairie for a considerable distance. At this ludicrous termination of our chase, we followed the example of our late ally, and turned back toward the party. We were skirting the brink of a deep ravine, when we saw Henry and the broad-chested pony coming toward us at a gallop.

“Here’s old Papin and Frederic, down from Fort Laramie!” shouted Henry, long before he came up. We had for some days expected this encounter. Papin was the bourgeois of Fort Laramie. He had come down the river with the buffalo robes and the beaver, the produce of the last winter’s trading. I had among our baggage a letter which I wished to commit to their hands; so requesting Henry to detain the boats if he could until my return, I set out after the wagons. They were about four miles in advance. In half an hour I overtook them, got the letter, trotted back upon the trail, and looking carefully, as I rode, saw a patch of broken, storm-blasted trees, and moving near them some little black specks like men and horses. Arriving at the place, I found a strange assembly. The boats, eleven in number, deep-laden with the skins, hugged close to the shore, to escape being borne down by the swift current. The rowers, swarthy ignoble Mexicans, turned their brutish faces upward to look, as I reached the bank. Papin sat in the middle of one of the boats upon the canvas covering that protected the robes. He was a stout, robust fellow, with a little gray eye, that had a peculiarly sly twinkle. “Frederic” also stretched his tall rawboned proportions close by the bourgeois, and “mountain-men” completed the group; some lounging in the boats, some strolling on shore; some attired in gayly painted buffalo robes, like Indian dandies; some with hair saturated with red paint, and beplastered with glue to their temples; and one bedaubed with vermilion upon his forehead and each cheek. They were a mongrel race; yet the French blood seemed to predominate; in a few, indeed, might be seen the black snaky eye of the Indian half-breed, and one and all, they seemed to aim at assimilating themselves to their savage associates.

I shook hands with the bourgeois, and delivered the letter; then the boats swung round into the stream and floated away. They had reason for haste, for already the voyage from Fort Laramie had occupied a full month, and the river was growing daily more shallow. Fifty times a day the boats had been aground, indeed; those who navigate the Platte invariably spend half their time upon sand-bars. Two of these boats,

the property of private traders, afterward separating from the rest, got hopelessly involved in the shallows, not very far from the Pawnee villages, and were soon surrounded by a swarm of the inhabitants. They carried off everything that they considered valuable, including most of the robes; and amused themselves by tying up the men left on guard and soundly whipping them with sticks.

We encamped that night upon the bank of the river. Among the emigrants there was an overgrown boy, some eighteen years old, with a head as round and about as large as a pumpkin, and fever-and-ague fits had dyed his face of a corresponding color. He wore an old white hat, tied under his chin with a handkerchief; his body was short and stout, but his legs of disproportioned and appalling length. I observed him at sunset, breasting the hill with gigantic strides, and standing against the sky on the summit, like a colossal pair of tongs. In a moment after we heard him screaming frantically behind the ridge, and nothing doubting that he was in the clutches of Indians or grizzly bears, some of the party caught up their rifles and ran to the rescue. His outcries, however, proved but an ebullition of joyous excitement; he had chased two little wolf pups to their burrow, and he was on his knees, grubbing away like a dog at the mouth of the hole, to get at them.

Before morning he caused more serious disquiet in the camp. It was his turn to hold the middle guard; but no sooner was he called up, than he coolly arranged a pair of saddle-bags under a wagon, laid his head upon them, closed his eyes, opened his mouth and fell asleep. The guard on our side of the camp, thinking it no part of his duty to look after the cattle of the emigrants, contented himself with watching our own horses and mules; the wolves, he said, were unusually noisy; but still no mischief was anticipated until the sun rose, and not a hoof or horn was in sight! The cattle were gone! While Tom was quietly slumbering, the wolves had driven them away.

Then we reaped the fruits of R.'s precious plan of traveling in company with emigrants. To leave them in their distress was not to be thought of, and we felt bound to wait until the cattle could be searched for, and, if possible, recovered. But the reader may be curious to know what punishment awaited the faithless Tom. By the wholesome law of the prairie, he who falls asleep on guard is condemned to walk all day leading his horse by the bridle, and we found much fault with our companions for not enforcing such a sentence on the offender. Nevertheless had he been of our party, I have no doubt he would in like manner have escaped scot-free. But the emigrants went farther than mere forbearance; they decreed that since Tom couldn't stand guard without falling asleep, he shouldn't stand guard at all, and henceforward his slumbers were unbroken. Establishing such a premium on drowsiness could have no very beneficial effect upon the vigilance of our sentinels; for it is far from agreeable, after riding from sunrise to sunset, to feel your slumbers interrupted by the butt of a rifle nudging your side, and

a sleepy voice growling in your ear that you must get up, to shiver and freeze for three weary hours at midnight.

“Buffalo! buffalo!” It was but a grim old bull, roaming the prairie by himself in misanthropic seclusion; but there might be more behind the hills. Dreading the monotony and languor of the camp, Shaw and I saddled our horses, buckled our holsters in their places, and set out with Henry Chatillon in search of the game. Henry, not intending to take part in the chase, but merely conducting us, carried his rifle with him, while we left ours behind as incumbrances. We rode for some five or six miles, and saw no living thing but wolves, snakes, and prairie dogs.

“This won’t do at all,” said Shaw.

“What won’t do?”

“There’s no wood about here to make a litter for the wounded man; I have an idea that one of us will need something of the sort before the day is over.”

There was some foundation for such an apprehension, for the ground was none of the best for a race, and grew worse continually as we proceeded; indeed it soon became desperately bad, consisting of abrupt hills and deep hollows, cut by frequent ravines not easy to pass. At length, a mile in advance, we saw a band of bulls. Some were scattered grazing over a green declivity, while the rest were crowded more densely together in the wide hollow below. Making a circuit to keep out of sight, we rode toward them until we ascended a hill within a furlong of them, beyond which nothing intervened that could possibly screen us from their view. We dismounted behind the ridge just out of sight, drew our saddle-girths, examined our pistols, and mounting again rode over the hill, and descended at a canter toward them, bending close to our horses’ necks. Instantly they took the alarm; those on the hill descended; those below gathered into a mass, and the whole got in motion, shouldering each other along at a clumsy gallop. We followed, spurring our horses to full speed; and as the herd rushed, crowding and trampling in terror through an opening in the hills, we were close at their heels, half suffocated by the clouds of dust. But as we drew near, their alarm and speed increased; our horses showed signs of the utmost fear, bounding violently aside as we approached, and refusing to enter among the herd. The buffalo now broke into several small bodies, scampering over the hills in different directions, and I lost sight of Shaw; neither of us knew where the other had gone. Old Pontiac ran like a frantic elephant up hill and down hill, his ponderous hoofs striking the prairie like sledge-hammers. He showed a curious mixture of eagerness and terror, straining to overtake the panic-stricken herd, but constantly recoiling in dismay as we drew near. The fugitives, indeed, offered no very attractive spectacle, with their enormous size and weight, their shaggy manes and the tattered remnants of their last

winter's hair covering their backs in irregular shreds and patches, and flying off in the wind as they ran. At length I urged my horse close behind a bull, and after trying in vain, by blows and spurring, to bring him alongside, I shot a bullet into the buffalo from this disadvantageous position. At the report, Pontiac swerved so much that I was again thrown a little behind the game. The bullet, entering too much in the rear, failed to disable the bull, for a buffalo requires to be shot at particular points, or he will certainly escape. The herd ran up a hill, and I followed in pursuit. As Pontiac rushed headlong down on the other side, I saw Shaw and Henry descending the hollow on the right, at a leisurely gallop; and in front, the buffalo were just disappearing behind the crest of the next hill, their short tails erect, and their hoofs twinkling through a cloud of dust.

At that moment, I heard Shaw and Henry shouting to me; but the muscles of a stronger arm than mine could not have checked at once the furious course of Pontiac, whose mouth was as insensible as leather. Added to this, I rode him that morning with a common snaffle, having the day before, for the benefit of my other horse, unbuckled from my bridle the curb which I ordinarily used. A stronger and hardier brute never trod the prairie; but the novel sight of the buffalo filled him with terror, and when at full speed he was almost uncontrollable. Gaining the top of the ridge, I saw nothing of the buffalo; they had all vanished amid the intricacies of the hills and hollows. Reloading my pistols, in the best way I could, I galloped on until I saw them again scuttling along at the base of the hill, their panic somewhat abated. Down went old Pontiac among them, scattering them to the right and left, and then we had another long chase. About a dozen bulls were before us, scouring over the hills, rushing down the declivities with tremendous weight and impetuosity, and then laboring with a weary gallop upward. Still Pontiac, in spite of spurring and beating, would not close with them. One bull at length fell a little behind the rest, and by dint of much effort I urged my horse within six or eight yards of his side. His back was darkened with sweat; he was panting heavily, while his tongue lolled out a foot from his jaws. Gradually I came up abreast of him, urging Pontiac with leg and rein nearer to his side, then suddenly he did what buffalo in such circumstances will always do; he slackened his gallop, and turning toward us, with an aspect of mingled rage and distress, lowered his huge shaggy head for a charge. Pontiac with a snort, leaped aside in terror, nearly throwing me to the ground, as I was wholly unprepared for such an evolution. I raised my pistol in a passion to strike him on the head, but thinking better of it fired the bullet after the bull, who had resumed his flight, then drew rein and determined to rejoin my companions. It was high time. The breath blew hard from Pontiac's nostrils, and the sweat rolled in big drops down his sides; I myself felt as if drenched in warm water. Pledging myself (and I redeemed the pledge) to take my revenge at a future opportunity, I looked round for some indications to show me where I was, and what course I ought to pursue; I might as well have looked for landmarks in

the midst of the ocean. How many miles I had run or in what direction, I had no idea; and around me the prairie was rolling in steep swells and pitches, without a single distinctive feature to guide me. I had a little compass hung at my neck; and ignorant that the Platte at this point diverged considerably from its easterly course, I thought that by keeping to the northward I should certainly reach it. So I turned and rode about two hours in that direction. The prairie changed as I advanced, softening away into easier undulations, but nothing like the Platte appeared, nor any sign of a human being; the same wild endless expanse lay around me still; and to all appearance I was as far from my object as ever. I began now to consider myself in danger of being lost; and therefore, reining in my horse, summoned the scanty share of woodcraft that I possessed (if that term be applicable upon the prairie) to extricate me. Looking round, it occurred to me that the buffalo might prove my best guides. I soon found one of the paths made by them in their passage to the river; it ran nearly at right angles to my course; but turning my horse's head in the direction it indicated, his freer gait and erected ears assured me that I was right.

But in the meantime my ride had been by no means a solitary one. The whole face of the country was dotted far and wide with countless hundreds of buffalo. They trooped along in files and columns, bulls cows, and calves, on the green faces of the declivities in front. They scrambled away over the hills to the right and left; and far off, the pale blue swells in the extreme distance were dotted with innumerable specks. Sometimes I surprised shaggy old bulls grazing alone, or sleeping behind the ridges I ascended. They would leap up at my approach, stare stupidly at me through their tangled manes, and then gallop heavily away. The antelope were very numerous; and as they are always bold when in the neighborhood of buffalo, they would approach quite near to look at me, gazing intently with their great round eyes, then suddenly leap aside, and stretch lightly away over the prairie, as swiftly as a racehorse. Squalid, ruffianlike wolves sneaked through the hollows and sandy ravines. Several times I passed through villages of prairie dogs, who sat, each at the mouth of his burrow, holding his paws before him in a supplicating attitude, and yelping away most vehemently, energetically whisking his little tail with every squeaking cry he uttered. Prairie dogs are not fastidious in their choice of companions; various long, checkered snakes were sunning themselves in the midst of the village, and demure little gray owls, with a large white ring around each eye, were perched side by side with the rightful inhabitants. The prairie teemed with life. Again and again I looked toward the crowded hillsides, and was sure I saw horsemen; and riding near, with a mixture of hope and dread, for Indians were abroad, I found them transformed into a group of buffalo. There was nothing in human shape amid all this vast congregation of brute forms.

When I turned down the buffalo path, the prairie seemed changed; only a wolf or two glided past at intervals, like conscious felons, never

looking to the right or left. Being now free from anxiety, I was at leisure to observe minutely the objects around me; and here, for the first time, I noticed insects wholly different from any of the varieties found farther to the eastward. Gaudy butterflies fluttered about my horse's head; strangely formed beetles, glittering with metallic luster, were crawling upon plants that I had never seen before; multitudes of lizards, too, were darting like lightning over the sand.

I had run to a great distance from the river. It cost me a long ride on the buffalo path before I saw from the ridge of a sand-hill the pale surface of the Platte glistening in the midst of its desert valleys, and the faint outline of the hills beyond waving along the sky. From where I stood, not a tree nor a bush nor a living thing was visible throughout the whole extent of the sun-scorched landscape. In half an hour I came upon the trail, not far from the river; and seeing that the party had not yet passed, I turned eastward to meet them, old Pontiac's long swinging trot again assuring me that I was right in doing so. Having been slightly ill on leaving camp in the morning six or seven hours of rough riding had fatigued me extremely. I soon stopped, therefore; flung my saddle on the ground, and with my head resting on it, and my horse's trail-rope tied loosely to my arm, lay waiting the arrival of the party, speculating meanwhile on the extent of the injuries Pontiac had received. At length the white wagon coverings rose from the verge of the plain. By a singular coincidence, almost at the same moment two horsemen appeared coming down from the hills. They were Shaw and Henry, who had searched for me a while in the morning, but well knowing the futility of the attempt in such a broken country, had placed themselves on the top of the highest hill they could find, and picketing their horses near them, as a signal to me, had laid down and fallen asleep. The stray cattle had been recovered, as the emigrants told us, about noon. Before sunset, we pushed forward eight miles farther.

JUNE 7, 1846.--Four men are missing; R., Sorel and two emigrants. They set out this morning after buffalo, and have not yet made their appearance; whether killed or lost, we cannot tell.

I find the above in my notebook, and well remember the council held on the occasion. Our fire was the scene of it; or the palpable superiority of Henry Chatillon's experience and skill made him the resort of the whole camp upon every question of difficulty. He was molding bullets at the fire, when the captain drew near, with a perturbed and care-worn expression of countenance, faithfully reflected on the heavy features of Jack, who followed close behind. Then emigrants came straggling from their wagons toward the common center; various suggestions were made to account for the absence of the four men, and one or two of the emigrants declared that when out after the cattle they had seen Indians dogging them, and crawling like wolves along the ridges of the hills. At this

time the captain slowly shook his head with double gravity, and solemnly remarked:

“It’s a serious thing to be traveling through this cursed wilderness”; an opinion in which Jack immediately expressed a thorough coincidence. Henry would not commit himself by declaring any positive opinion.

“Maybe he only follow the buffalo too far; maybe Indian kill him; maybe he got lost; I cannot tell!”

With this the auditors were obliged to rest content; the emigrants, not in the least alarmed, though curious to know what had become of their comrades, walked back to their wagons and the captain betook himself pensively to his tent. Shaw and I followed his example.

“It will be a bad thing for our plans,” said he as we entered, “if these fellows don’t get back safe. The captain is as helpless on the prairie as a child. We shall have to take him and his brother in tow; they will hang on us like lead.”

“The prairie is a strange place,” said I. “A month ago I should have thought it rather a startling affair to have an acquaintance ride out in the morning and lose his scalp before night, but here it seems the most natural thing in the world; not that I believe that R. has lost his yet.”

If a man is constitutionally liable to nervous apprehensions, a tour on the distant prairies would prove the best prescription; for though when in the neighborhood of the Rocky Mountains he may at times find himself placed in circumstances of some danger, I believe that few ever breathe that reckless atmosphere without becoming almost indifferent to any evil chance that may befall themselves or their friends.

Shaw had a propensity for luxurious indulgence. He spread his blanket with the utmost accuracy on the ground, picked up the sticks and stones that he thought might interfere with his comfort, adjusted his saddle to serve as a pillow, and composed himself for his night’s rest. I had the first guard that evening; so, taking my rifle, I went out of the tent. It was perfectly dark. A brisk wind blew down from the hills, and the sparks from the fire were streaming over the prairie. One of the emigrants, named Morton, was my companion; and laying our rifles on the grass, we sat down together by the fire. Morton was a Kentuckian, an athletic fellow, with a fine intelligent face, and in his manners and conversation he showed the essential characteristics of a gentleman. Our conversation turned on the pioneers of his gallant native State. The three hours of our watch dragged away at last, and we went to call up the relief.

R.’s guard succeeded mine. He was absent; but the captain, anxious lest

the camp should be left defenseless, had volunteered to stand in his place; so I went to wake him up. There was no occasion for it, for the captain had been awake since nightfall. A fire was blazing outside of the tent, and by the light which struck through the canvas, I saw him and Jack lying on their backs, with their eyes wide open. The captain responded instantly to my call; he jumped up, seized the double-barreled rifle, and came out of the tent with an air of solemn determination, as if about to devote himself to the safety of the party. I went and lay down, not doubting that for the next three hours our slumbers would be guarded with sufficient vigilance.

SELECTED QUOTATIONS OF DR. SAMUEL JOHNSON

From The Project Gutenberg EBook of *Dictionary of Quotations from Ancient and Modern, English and Foreign Sources*, by James Wood

=All censure of a man's self is oblique praise; it is in order to show how much he can spare.=

=A wicked fellow is the most pious when he takes to it. He'll beat you all in piety.=

=Combinations of wickedness would overwhelm the world, did not those who have long practised perfidy grow faithless to each other.=

=Contempt is a kind of gangrene, which, if it seizes one part of a character, corrupts all the rest by degrees.=

=Deceit and falsehood, whatever conveniences they may for a time promise or produce, are, in the sum of life, obstacles to happiness.=

=Economy is the parent of integrity, of liberty, and of ease, and the beautiful sister of temperance, of cheerfulness, and health.=

=Every desire is a viper in the bosom, who,

when he was chill, was harmless, but when
warmth gave him strength, exerted it in
poison.=

=Fame is a shuttlecock. If it be struck only at
one end of a room, it will soon fall to the floor.
To keep it up, it must be struck at both ends.=

=Few things are more unpleasant than the
transaction of business with men who are
above knowing or caring what they have
to do.=

=Frugality may be termed the daughter of
prudence, the sister of temperance, and the
parent of liberty.=

=Gluttony, where it prevails, is more violent,
and certainly more despicable, than avarice
itself.=

=Good and evil will grow up in this world together;
and they who complain in peace
of the insolence of the populace must remember
that their insolence in peace is
bravery in war.=

=He is no wise man that will quit a certainty
for an uncertainty.=

=Hell is paved with good intentions.=

=Hope is itself a species of happiness, and perhaps
the chief happiness which this world
affords; but, like all other pleasures, its excesses
must be expiated by pain; and expectations
improperly indulged must end in
disappointment.=

=Human life is everywhere a state in which

much is to be endured and little to be enjoyed.=

=I am very fond of the company of ladies. I like their beauty; I like their delicacy; I like their vivacity; and I like their silence.=

=Knowledge without integrity is dangerous and dreadful.=

=Labour is exercise continued to fatigue; exercise is labour used only while it produces pleasure.=

=Life, to be worthy of a rational being, must be always in progression: we must always purpose to do more or better than in time past.=

=Make the most and the best of your lot, and compare yourself not with the few that are above you, but with the multitudes which are below you.=

="No," a monosyllable, the easiest learned by the child, but the most difficult to practise by the man, contains within it the import of a life, the weal or woe of an eternity.=

=One of the old man's miseries is that he cannot easily find a companion able to partake with him of the past.=

=Our esteem of great powers, or amiable qualities newly discovered, may embroider a day or a week, but a friendship of twenty years is interwoven with the texture of life.=

=Patriotism is the last refuge of a scoundrel.=

=Pleasure which cannot be obtained but by unreasonable and unsuitable expense, must always end in pain.=

=Reason is like the sun, of which the light is constant, uniform, and lasting; fancy, a meteor of bright but transitory lustre, irregular in its motion and delusive in its direction.=

=Self-confidence is the first requisite to great undertakings.=

=To those that have lived long together, everything heard and everything seen recalls some pleasure communicated or some benefit conferred, some petty quarrel or some slight endearment.=

=Unnumbered suppliants crowd preferment's gate, / Athirst for wealth, and burning to be great; / Delusive fortune hears the incessant call, / They mount, they shine, evaporate, and fall.=

=We all live upon the hope of pleasing somebody; and the pleasure of pleasing ought to be greatest, and at last always will be greatest, when our endeavours are exerted in consequence of our duty.=

LECTURE IV. CHEMICAL AFFINITY--HEAT.

The Project Gutenberg EBook of *On the various forces of nature and their relations to each other*, by Michael Faraday

We shall have to pay a little more attention to the forces existing in water before we can have a clear idea on the subject. Besides the attraction which there is between its particles to make it hold together as a liquid or a solid, there is also another force, different

from the former--one which, yesterday, by means of the voltaic battery, we overcame, drawing from the water two different substances--which, when heated by means of the electric spark, attracted each other, and rushed into combination to reproduce water. Now, I propose to-day to continue this subject, and trace the various phenomena of chemical affinity; and for this purpose, as we yesterday considered the character of oxygen, of which I have here two jars (oxygen being those particles derived from the water which enable other bodies to burn), we will now consider the other constituent of water; and, without embarrassing you too much with the way in which these things are made, I will proceed now to shew you our common way of making _hydrogen_. (I called it hydrogen yesterday--it is so called because it helps to generate water.)[A] I put into this retort some zinc, water, and oil of vitriol, and immediately an action takes place, which produces an abundant evolution of gas, now coming over into this jar, and bubbling up in appearance exactly like the oxygen we obtained yesterday.

[A] ὕδωρ, “water,” and γεννῶω, “I generate.”

The processes, you see, are very different, though the result is the same, in so far as it gives us certain gaseous particles. Here, then, is the hydrogen. I shewed you yesterday certain qualities of this gas; now let me exhibit you some other properties. Unlike oxygen, which is a supporter of combustion, and will not burn, hydrogen itself is combustible. There is a jar full of it; and if I carry it along in this manner, and put a light to it, I think you will see it take fire, not with a bright light--you will at all events hear it, if you do not see it. Now, that is a body entirely different from oxygen: it is extremely light; for although yesterday you saw twice as much of this hydrogen produced on the one side as on the other, by the voltaic battery, it was only one-eighth the weight of the oxygen. I carry this jar upside-down. Why? Because I know that it is a very light body, and that it will continue in this jar upside-down quite as effectually as the water will in that jar which is not upside-down; and just as I can pour water from one vessel into another in the right position to receive it, so can I pour this gas from one jar into another when they are upside-down. See what I am about to do. There is no hydrogen in this jar at present, but I will gently turn this jar of hydrogen up under this other jar (fig. 28), and then we will examine the two. We shall see, on applying a light, that the hydrogen has left the jar in which it was at first, and has poured upwards into the other, and there we shall find it.

You now understand that we can have particles of very different kinds, and that they can have different bulks and weights; and there are two or three very interesting experiments which serve to illustrate this. For instance, if I blow soap bubbles with the breath from my mouth, you will see them fall, because I fill them with common air, and the water which forms the bubble carries it down. But now, if I inhale

hydrogen gas into my lungs (it does no harm to the lungs, although it does no good to them), see what happens. [The Lecturer inhaled some hydrogen, and after one or two ineffectual attempts, succeeded in blowing a splendid bubble, which rose majestically and slowly to the ceiling of the theatre, where it burst.] That shews you very well how light a substance this is; for, notwithstanding all the heavy bad air from my lungs, and the weight of the bubble, you saw how it was carried up. I want you now to consider this phenomenon of weight as indicating how exceedingly different particles are one from the other; and I will take as illustrations these very common things--air, water, the heaviest body, platinum, and this gas: and observe how they differ in this respect; for if I take a piece of platinum of that size (fig. 29), it is equal to the weight of portions of water, air, and hydrogen of the bulks I have represented in these spheres. And this illustration gives you a very good idea of the extraordinary difference with regard to the gravity of the articles having this enormous difference in bulk. [The following tabular statement having reference to this illustration appeared on the diagram board.]

Hydrogen,	1			
Air,	14.4	1		
Water,	11943	829	1	
Platinum,	256774	17831	21.5	

Whenever oxygen and hydrogen unite together they produce water; and you have seen the extraordinary difference between the bulk and appearance of the water so produced, and the particles of which it consists chemically. Now, we have never yet been able to reduce either oxygen or hydrogen to the liquid state; and yet their first impulse, when chemically combined, is to take up first this liquid condition, and then the solid condition. We never combine these different particles together without producing water; and it is curious to think how often you must have made the experiment of combining oxygen and hydrogen to form water without knowing it. Take a candle, for instance, and a clean silver spoon (or a piece of clean tin will do), and if you hold it over the flame, you immediately cover it with dew--not a smoke--which presently evaporates. This perhaps will serve to shew it better. Mr. Anderson will put a candle under that jar, and you will see how soon the water is produced (fig. 30). Look at that dimness on the sides of the glass, which will soon produce drops, and trickle down into the plate. Well, that dimness and these drops are water, formed by the union of the oxygen of the air with the hydrogen existing in the wax of which that candle is formed.

And now, having brought you in the first place to the consideration of chemical attraction, I must enlarge your ideas so as to include all substances which have this attraction for each other--for it changes the character of bodies, and alters them in this way and that way in the most extraordinary manner, and produces other phenomena wonderful to think about. Here is some chlorate of potash, and there some sulphuret of antimony.[17] We will mix these two different sets of particles together; and I want to shew you in a general sort of way some of the phenomena which take place when we make different particles act together. Now, I can make these bodies act upon each other in several ways. In this case I am going to apply heat to the mixture; but if I were to give a blow with a hammer, the same result would follow. [A lighted match was brought to the mixture, which immediately exploded with a sudden flash, evolving a dense white smoke.] There you see the result of the action of chemical affinity overcoming the attraction of cohesion of the particles. Again, here is a little sugar[18], quite a different substance from the black sulphuret of antimony, and you shall see what takes place when we put the two together. [The mixture was touched with sulphuric acid, when it took fire and burnt gradually, and with a brighter flame than in the former instance.] Observe this chemical affinity travelling about the mass, and setting it on fire, and throwing it into such wonderful agitation!

I must now come to a few circumstances which require careful consideration. We have already examined one of the effects of this chemical affinity; but to make the matter more clear we must point out some others. And here are two salts dissolved in water[19]. They are both colourless solutions, and in these glasses you cannot see any difference between them. But if I mix them, I shall have chemical attraction take place. I will pour the two together into this glass, and you will at once see, I have no doubt, a certain amount of change. Look, they are already becoming milky, but they are sluggish in their action--not quick as the others were--for we have endless varieties of rapidity in chemical action. Now, if I mix them together, and stir them, so as to bring them properly together, you will soon see what a different result is produced. As I mix them, they get thicker and thicker, and you see the liquid is hardening and stiffening, and before long I shall have it quite hard; and before the end of the lecture it will be a solid stone--a wet stone, no doubt, but more or less solid--in consequence of the chemical affinity. Is not this changing two liquids into a solid body a wonderful manifestation of chemical affinity?

There is another remarkable circumstance in chemical affinity, which is, that it is capable of either waiting or acting at once. And this is very singular, because we know of nothing of the kind in the forces either of gravitation or cohesion. For instance, here are some oxygen particles, and here is a lump of carbon particles. I am going to put the carbon particles into the oxygen; they can act, but they do

not--they are just like this unlighted candle. It stands here quietly on the table, waiting until we want to light it. But it is not so in this other case. Here is a substance, gaseous like the oxygen, and if I put these particles of metal into it, the two combine at once. The copper and the chlorine unite by their power of chemical affinity, and produce a body entirely unlike either of the substances used. And in this other case, it is not that there is any deficiency of affinity between the carbon and oxygen; for the moment I choose to put them in a condition to exert their affinity, you will see the difference. [The piece of charcoal was ignited, and introduced into the jar of oxygen, when the combustion proceeded with vivid scintillations.]

Now, this chemical action is set going exactly as it would be if I had lighted the candle, or as it is when the servant puts coals on and lights the fire: the substances wait until we do something which is able to start the action. Can anything be more beautiful than this combustion of charcoal in oxygen? You must understand that each of these little sparks is a portion of the charcoal, or the bark of the charcoal, thrown off white-hot into the oxygen, and burning in it most brilliantly, as you see. And now let me tell you another thing, or you will go away with a very imperfect notion of the powers and effects of this affinity. There you see some charcoal burning in oxygen. Well, a piece of lead will burn in oxygen just as well as the charcoal does, or indeed better; for absolutely that piece of lead will act at once upon the oxygen as the copper did in the other vessel with regard to the chlorine. And here also a piece of iron: if I light it and put it into the oxygen, it will burn away just as the carbon did. And I will take some lead, and shew you that it will burn in the common atmospheric oxygen at the ordinary temperature. These are the lumps of lead which, you remember, we had the other day--the two pieces which clung together. Now these pieces, if I take them to-day and press them together, will not stick; and the reason is, that they have attracted from the atmosphere a part of the oxygen there present, and have become coated as with a varnish by the oxide of lead, which is formed on the surface by a real process of combustion or combination. There you see the iron burning very well in oxygen; and I will tell you the reason why those scissors and that lead do not take fire whilst they are lying on the table. Here the lead is in a lump, and the coating of oxide remains on its surface; whilst there you see the melted oxide is clearing itself off from the iron, and allowing more and more to go on burning. In this case, however [holding up a small glass tube containing lead pyrophorus.[20]], the lead has been very carefully produced in fine powder, and put into a glass tube, and hermetically sealed, so as to preserve it; and I expect you will see it take fire at once. This has been made about a month ago, and has thus had time enough to sink down to its normal temperature. What you see, therefore, is the result of chemical affinity alone. [The tube was broken at the end, and the lead poured out on to a piece of paper, whereupon it immediately took fire.] Look, look at the lead burning; why, it has set

fire to the paper! Now, that is nothing more than the common affinity always existing between very clean lead and the atmospheric oxygen; and the reason why this iron does not burn until it is made red-hot is, because it has got a coating of oxide about it, which stops the action of the oxygen--putting a varnish, as it were, upon its surface, as we varnish a picture, absolutely forming a substance which prevents the natural chemical affinity between the bodies from acting.

I must now take you a little further in this kind of illustration--or consideration, I would rather call it--of chemical affinity. This attraction between different particles exists also most curiously in cases where they are previously combined with other substances. Here is a little chlorate of potash, containing the oxygen which we found yesterday could be procured from it. It contains the oxygen there combined and held down by its chemical affinity with other things; but still it can combine with sugar, as you saw. This affinity can thus act across substances; and I want you to see how curiously what we call combustion acts with respect to this force of chemical affinity. If I take a piece of phosphorus and set fire to it, and then place a jar of air over the phosphorus, you see the combustion which we are having there on account of chemical affinity (combustion being in all cases the result of chemical affinity). The phosphorus is escaping in that vapour, which will condense into a snow-like mass at the close of the lecture. But suppose I limit the atmosphere, what then? why, even the phosphorus will go out. Here is a piece of camphor, which will burn very well in the atmosphere, and even on water it will float about and burn, by reason of some of its particles gaining access to the air. But if I limit the quantity of air by placing a jar over it, as I am now doing, you will soon find the camphor will go out. Well, why does it go out? Not for want of air, for there is plenty of air remaining in the jar. Perhaps you will be shrewd enough to say, for want of oxygen.

This, therefore, leads us to the inquiry as to whether oxygen can do more than a certain amount of work. The oxygen there (fig. 30) cannot go on burning an unlimited quantity of candle, for that has gone out, as you see; and its amount of chemical attraction or affinity is just as strikingly limited: it can no more be fallen short of or exceeded than can the attraction of gravitation. You might as soon attempt to destroy gravitation, or weight, or all things that exist, as to destroy the exact amount of force exerted by this oxygen. And when I pointed out to you that 8 by weight of oxygen to 1 by weight of hydrogen went to form water, I meant this, that neither of them would combine in different proportions with the other; for you cannot get 10 of hydrogen to combine with 6 of oxygen, or 10 of oxygen to combine with 6 of hydrogen--it must be 8 of oxygen and 1 of hydrogen. Now, suppose I limit the action in this way: this piece of cotton wool burns, as you see, very well in the atmosphere; and I have known of cases of cotton-mills being fired as if with gunpowder, through the very finely-divided particles of cotton being diffused through the

atmosphere in the mill, when it has sometimes happened that a flame has caught these raised particles, and it has run from one end of the mill to the other, and blown it up. That, then, is on account of the affinity which the cotton has for the oxygen; but suppose I set fire to this piece of cotton, which is rolled up tightly, it does not go on burning, because I have limited the supply of oxygen, and the inside is prevented from having access to the oxygen, just as it was in the case of the lead by the oxide. But here is some cotton which has been imbued with oxygen in a certain manner. I need not trouble you now with the way it is prepared; it is called gun-cotton.[21] See how that burns [setting fire to a piece]; it is very different from the other, because the oxygen that must be present in its proper amount is put there beforehand. And I have here some pieces of paper which are prepared like the gun-cotton[22], and imbued with bodies containing oxygen. Here is some which has been soaked in nitrate of strontia--you will see the beautiful red colour of its flame; and here is another which I think contains baryta, which gives that fine green light; and I have here some more which has been soaked in nitrate of copper--it does not burn quite so brightly, but still very beautifully. In all these cases the combustion goes on independent of the oxygen of the atmosphere. And here we have some gunpowder put into a case, in order to shew that it is capable of burning under water. You know that we put it into a gun, shutting off the atmosphere, with shot, and yet the oxygen which it contains supplies the particles with that without which chemical action could not proceed. Now, I have a vessel of water here, and am going to make the experiment of putting this fuse under the water, and you will see whether that water can extinguish it. Here it is burning out of the water, and there it is burning under the water; and so it will continue until exhausted, and all by reason of the requisite amount of oxygen being contained within the substance. It is by this kind of attraction of the different particles one to the other that we are enabled to trace the laws of chemical affinity, and the wonderful variety of the exertions of these laws.

Now, I want you to observe that one great exertion of this power, which is known as chemical affinity, is to produce HEAT and light. You know, as a matter of fact, no doubt, that when bodies burn they give out heat; but it is a curious thing that this heat does not continue--the heat goes away as soon as the action stops, and you see thereby that it depends upon the action during the time it is going on. It is not so with gravitation: this force is continuous, and is just as effective in making that lead press on the table as it was when it first fell there. Nothing occurs there which disappears when the action of falling is over; the pressure is upon the table, and will remain there until the lead is removed; whereas, in the action of chemical affinity to give light and heat, they go away immediately the action is over. This lamp seems to evolve heat and light continuously; but it is owing to a constant stream of air coming into it on all sides, and this work of producing light and heat by chemical

affinity will subside as soon as the stream of air is interrupted. What, then, is this curious condition of heat? Why is the evolution of another power of matter, of a power new to us, and which we must consider as if it were now for the very first time brought under our notice? What is heat? We recognise heat by its power of liquefying solid bodies and vaporising liquid bodies, by its power of setting in action, and very often overcoming, chemical affinity. Then, how do we obtain heat? We obtain it in various ways--most abundantly by means of the chemical affinity we have just before been speaking about; but we can also obtain it in many other ways. Friction will produce heat. The Indians rub pieces of wood together until they make them hot enough to take fire; and such things have been known as two branches of a tree rubbing together so hard as to set the tree on fire. I do not suppose I shall set these two pieces of wood on fire by friction; but I can readily produce heat enough to ignite some phosphorus. [The Lecturer here rubbed two pieces of cedar-wood strongly against each other for a minute, and then placed on them a piece of phosphorus, which immediately took fire.] And if you take a smooth metal button stuck on a cork, and rub it on a piece of soft deal wood, you will make it so hot as to scorch wood and paper, and burn a match.

[Illustration: Fig. 31.]

I am now going to shew you that we can obtain heat, not by chemical affinity alone, but by the pressure of air. Suppose I take a pellet of cotton and moisten it with a little ether, and put it into a glass tube (fig. 31), and then take a piston and press it down suddenly, I expect I shall be able to burn a little of that ether in the vessel. It wants a suddenness of pressure, or we shall not do what we require. [The piston was forcibly pressed down, when a flame, due to the combustion of the ether, was visible in the lower part of the syringe.] All we want is to get a little ether in vapour, and give fresh air each time, and so we may go on again and again getting heat enough by the compression of air to fire the ether-vapour.

This, then, I think, will be sufficient, accompanied with all you have previously seen, to shew you how we procure heat. And now for the effects of this power. We need not consider many of them on the present occasion, because when you have seen its power of changing ice into water and water into steam, you have seen the two principal results of the application of heat. I want you now to see how it expands all bodies--all bodies but one, and that under limited circumstances. Mr. Anderson will hold a lamp under that retort, and you will see the moment he does so that the air will issue abundantly from the neck, which is under water, because the heat which he applies to the air causes it to expand. And here is a brass rod (fig. 32) which goes through that hole, and fits also accurately into this gauge; but if I make it warm with this spirit-lamp, it will only go in the gauge or through the hole with difficulty; and if I were to put it into

boiling-water, it would not go through at all. Again, as soon as the heat escapes from bodies they collapse. See how the air is contracting in the vessel, now that Mr. Anderson has taken away his lamp: the stem of it is filling with water. Notice, too, now, that although I cannot get the tube through this hole or into the gauge, the moment I cool it by dipping it into water, it goes through with perfect facility; so that we have a perfect proof of this power of heat to contract and expand bodies.

LESSON XX.

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of McGuffey's Second Eclectic Reader
by William Holmes McGuffey

di vid'ed quar'rel a gree' thus sey'tle

set'tling ker'nel e'qual apt parts

THE QUARREL.

1. Under a great tree in the woods, two boys saw a fine, large nut, and both ran to get it.

2. James got to it first, and picked it up.

3. "It is mine," said John, "for I was the first to see it."

4. "No, it is mine" said James, "for I was the first to pick it up."

[Illustration: Three boys standing by a fence, one older than the others.]

5. Thus, they at once began to quarrel about the nut.

6. As they could not agree whose it should be, they called an older boy, and asked him.

7. The older boy said, "I will settle this quarrel."

8. He took the nut, and broke the shell. He then took out the kernel, and divided the shell into two parts, as nearly equal as he could.

9. "This half of the shell," said he, "belongs to the boy who first saw the nut.

10. "And this half belongs to the boy who picked it up.

11. "The kernel of the nut, I shall keep as my pay for settling the

quarrel.

12. "This is the way," said he, laughing, "in which quarrels are very apt to end."

The King and his three Daughters
from The Project Gutenberg EBook of Hieroglyphic Tales, by Horace Walpole

There was formerly a king, who had three daughters--that is, he would have had three, if he had had one more, but some how or other the eldest never was born. She was extremely handsome, had a great deal of wit, and spoke French in perfection, as all the authors of that age affirm, and yet none of them pretend that she ever existed. It is very certain that the two other princesses were far from beauties; the second had a strong Yorkshire dialect, and the youngest had bad teeth and but one leg, which occasioned her dancing very ill.

As it was not probable that his majesty would have any more children, being eighty-seven years, two months, and thirteen days old when his queen died, the states of the kingdom were very anxious to have the princesses married. But there was one great obstacle to this settlement, though so important to the peace of the kingdom. The king insisted that his eldest daughter should be married first, and as there was no such person, it was very difficult to fix upon a proper husband for her. The courtiers all approved his majesty's resolution; but as under the best princes there will always be a number of discontented, the nation was torn into different factions, the grumblers or patriots insisting that the second princess was the eldest, and ought to be declared heiress apparent to the crown. Many pamphlets were written pro and con, but the ministerial party pretended that the chancellor's argument was unanswerable, who affirmed, that the second princess could not be the eldest, as no princess-royal ever had a Yorkshire accent. A few persons who were attached to the youngest princess, took advantage of this plea for whispering that _her_ royal highness's pretensions to the crown were the best of all; for as there was no eldest princess, and as the second must be the first, if there was no first, and as she could not be the second if she was the first, and as the chancellor had proved that she could not be the first, it followed plainly by every idea of law that she could be nobody at all; and then the consequence followed of course, that the youngest must be the eldest, if she had no elder sister.

It is inconceivable what animosities and mischiefs arose from these different titles; and each faction endeavoured to strengthen itself by foreign alliances. The court party having no real object for their attachment, were the most attached of all, and made up by warmth for the want of foundation in their principles. The clergy in general were

devoted to this, which was styled _the first party_. The physicians embraced the second; and the lawyers declared for the third, or the faction of the youngest princess, because it seemed best calculated to admit of doubts and endless litigation.

While the nation was in this distracted situation, there arrived the prince of Quifferiquimini, who would have been the most accomplished hero of the age, if he had not been dead, and had spoken any language but the Egyptian, and had not had three legs. Notwithstanding these blemishes, the eyes of the whole nation were immediately turned upon him, and each party wished to see him married to the princess whose cause they espoused.

The old king received him with the most distinguished honours; the senate made the most fulsome addresses to him; the princesses were so taken with him, that they grew more bitter enemies than ever; and the court ladies and petit-maitres invented a thousand new fashions upon his account--every thing was to be à la Quifferiquimini. Both men and women of fashion left off rouge to look the more cadaverous; their cloaths were embroidered with hieroglyphics, and all the ugly characters they could gather from Egyptian antiquities, with which they were forced to be contented, it being impossible to learn a language that is lost; and all tables, chairs, stools, cabinets and couches, were made with only three legs; the last, however, soon went out of fashion, as being very inconvenient.

The prince, who, ever since his death, had had but a weakly constitution, was a little fatigued with this excess of attentions, and would often wish himself at home in his coffin. But his greatest difficulty of all was to get rid of the youngest princess, who kept hopping after him wherever he went, and was so full of admiration of his three legs, and so modest about having but one herself, and so inquisitive to know how his three legs were set on, that being the best natured man in the world, it went to his heart whenever in a fit of peevishness he happened to drop an impatient word, which never failed to throw her into an agony of tears, and then she looked so ugly that it was impossible for him to be tolerably civil to her. He was not much more inclined to the second princess--In truth, it was the eldest who made the conquest of his affections: and so violently did his passion encrease one Tuesday morning, that breaking through all prudential considerations (for there were many reasons which ought to have determined his choice in favour of either of the other sisters) he hurried to the old king, acquainted him with his love, and demanded the eldest princess in marriage. Nothing could equal the joy of the good old monarch, who wished for nothing but to live to see the consummation of this match. Throwing his arms about the prince-skeleton's neck and watering his hollow cheeks with warm tears, he granted his request, and added, that he would immediately resign his crown to him and his favourite daughter.

I am forced for want of room to pass over many circumstances that would add greatly to the beauty of this history, and am sorry I must dash the reader's impatience by acquainting him, that notwithstanding the eagerness of the old king and youthful ardour of the prince, the nuptials were obliged to be postponed; the archbishop declaring that it was essentially necessary to have a dispensation from the pope, the parties being related within the forbidden degrees; a woman that never was, and a man that had been, being deemed first cousins in the eye of the canon law.

Hence arose a new difficulty. The religion of the Quifferiquiminians was totally opposite to that of the papists. The former believed in nothing but grace; and they had a high-priest of their own, who pretended that he was master of the whole fee-simple of grace, and by that possession could cause every thing to have been that never had been, and could prevent every thing that had been from ever having been. "We have nothing to do, said the prince to the king, but to send a solemn embassy to the high-priest of grace, with a present of a hundred thousand million of ingots, and he will cause your charming no-daughter to have been, and will prevent my having died, and then there will be no occasion for a dispensation from your old fool at Rome."--How! thou impious, atheistical bag of drybones, cried the old king; dost thou profane our holy religion? Thou shalt have no daughter of mine, thou three-legged skeleton--Go and be buried and be damned, as thou must be; for as thou art dead, thou art past repentance: I would sooner give my child to a baboon, who has one leg more than thou hast, than bestow her on such a reprobate corpse--You had better give your one-legged infant to the baboon, said the prince, they are fitter for one another--As much a corpse as I am, I am preferable to nobody; and who the devil would have married your no-daughter, but a dead body! For my religion, I lived and died in it, and it is not in my power to change it now if I would--but for your part--a great shout interrupted this dialogue, and the captain of the guard rushing into the royal closet, acquainted his majesty, that the second princess, in revenge of the prince's neglect, had given her hand to a drysalter, who was a common-council-man, and that the city, in consideration of the match, had proclaimed them king and queen, allowing his majesty to retain the title for his life, which they had fixed for the term of six months; and ordering, in respect of his royal birth, that the prince should immediately lie in state and have a pompous funeral.

This revolution was so sudden and so universal, that all parties approved, or were forced to seem to approve it. The old king died the next day, as the courtiers said, for joy; the prince of Quifferiquimini was buried in spite of his appeal to the law of nations; and the youngest princess went distracted, and was shut up in a madhouse, calling out day and night for a husband with three legs.

THE OLD PEABODY PEW

A Christmas Romance of a Country Church

from The Project Gutenberg EBook of Homespun Tales, by Kate Douglas Wiggin

DEDICATION

To a certain handful of dear New England women of names unknown to the world, dwelling in a certain quiet village, alike unknown:--

We have worked together to make our little corner of the great universe a pleasanter place in which to live, and so we know, not only one another's names, but something of one another's joys and sorrows, cares and burdens, economies, hopes, and anxieties.

We all remember the dusty uphill road that leads to the green church common. We remember the white spire pointing upward against a background of blue sky and feathery elms. We remember the sound of the bell that falls on the Sabbath morning stillness, calling us across the daisy-sprinkled meadows of June, the golden hayfields of July, or the dazzling whiteness and deep snowdrifts of December days. The little cabinet-organ that plays the Doxology, the hymn-books from which we sing "Praise God from whom all blessings flow," the sweet freshness of the old meeting-house, within and without,--how we have toiled to secure and preserve these humble mercies for ourselves and our children!

There really is a Dorcas Society, as you and I well know, and one not unlike that in these pages; and you and I have lived through many discouraging, laughable, and beautiful experiences while we emulated the Bible Dorcas, that woman "full of good works and alms deeds."

There never was a Peabody Pew in the Tory Hill Meeting-House, and Nancy's love story and Justin's never happened within its century-old walls, but I have imagined only one of the many romances that have had their birth under the shadow of that steeple, did we but realize it.

As you have sat there on open-windowed Sundays, looking across purple clover-fields to blue distant mountains, watching the palm-leaf fans swaying to and fro in the warm stillness before sermon time, did not the place seem full of memories, for has not the life of two villages ebbed and flowed beneath that ancient roof? You heard the hum of droning bees and followed the airy wings of butterflies fluttering over the grave-stones in the old churchyard, and underneath almost every moss-grown tablet some humble romance lies buried and all but forgotten.

If it had not been for you, I should never have written this story, so I give it back to you tied with a sprig from Ophelia's nosegay; a sprig of "rosemary, that's for remembrance."

K. D. W.

August, 1907

I. The Old Peabody Pew

Edgewood, like all the other villages along the banks of the Saco, is full of sunny slopes and leafy hollows. There are little, rounded, green-clad hillocks that might, like their scriptural sisters, “skip with joy”; and there are grand, rocky hills tufted with gaunt pine trees--these leading the eye to the splendid heights of a neighbor State, where snow-crowned peaks tower in the blue distance, sweeping the horizon in a long line of majesty.

Tory Hill holds its own among the others for peaceful beauty and fair prospect, and on its broad, level summit sits the white-painted Orthodox Meeting-House. This faces a grassy common where six roads meet, as if the early settlers had determined that no one should lack salvation because of a difficulty in reaching its visible source.

The old church has had a dignified and fruitful past, dating from that day in 1761 when young Paul Coffin received his call to preach at a stipend of fifty pounds sterling a year; answering “that never having heard of any Uneasiness among the people about his Doctrine or manner of life, he declared himself pleased to Settle as Soon as might be Judged Convenient.”

But that was a hundred and fifty years ago, and much has happened since those simple, strenuous old days. The chastening hand of time has been laid somewhat heavily on the town as well as on the church. Some of her sons have marched to the wars and died on the field of honor; some, seeking better fortunes, have gone westward; others, wearying of village life, the rocky soil, and rigors of farm-work, have become entangled in the noise and competition, the rush and strife, of cities. When the sexton rings the bell nowadays, on a Sunday morning, it seems to have lost some of its old-time militant strength, something of its hope and courage; but it still rings, and although the Davids and Solomons, the Matthews, Marks, and Pauls of former congregations have left few descendants to perpetuate their labors, it will go on ringing as long as there is a Tabitha, a Dorcas, a Lois, or a Eunice left in the community.

This sentiment had been maintained for a quarter of a century, but it was now especially strong, as the old Tory Hill Meeting-House had been undergoing for several years more or less extensive repairs. In point of fact, the still stronger word, “improvements,” might be used

with impunity; though whenever the Dorcas Society, being female, and therefore possessed of notions regarding comfort and beauty, suggested any serious changes, the finance committees, which were inevitably male in their composition, generally disapproved of making any impious alterations in a tabernacle, chapel, temple, or any other building used for purposes of worship. The majority in these august bodies asserted that their ancestors had prayed and sung there for a century and a quarter, and what was good enough for their ancestors was entirely suitable for them. Besides, the community was becoming less and less prosperous, and church-going was growing more and more lamentably uncommon, so that even from a business standpoint, any sums expended upon decoration by a poor and struggling parish would be worse than wasted.

In the particular year under discussion in this story, the valiant and progressive Mrs. Jeremiah Burbank was the president of the Dorcas Society, and she remarked privately and publicly that if her ancestors liked a smoky church, they had a perfect right to the enjoyment of it, but that she did n't intend to sit through meeting on winter Sundays, with her white ostrich feather turning gray and her eyes smarting and watering, for the rest of her natural life.

Whereupon, this being in a business session, she then and there proposed to her already hypnotized constituents ways of earning enough money to build a new chimney on the other side of the church.

An awe-stricken community witnessed this beneficent act of vandalism, and, finding that no thunderbolts of retribution descended from the skies, greatly relished the change. If one or two aged persons complained that they could not sleep as sweetly during sermon-time in the now clear atmosphere of the church, and that the parson's eye was keener than before, why, that was a mere detail, and could not be avoided; what was the loss of a little sleep compared with the discoloration of Mrs. Jere Burbank's white ostrich feather and the smarting of Mrs. Jere Burbank's eyes?

A new furnace followed the new chimney, in due course, and as a sense of comfort grew, there was opportunity to notice the lack of beauty. Twice in sixty years had some well-to-do summer parishioner painted the interior of the church at his own expense; but although the roof had been many times reshingled, it had always persisted in leaking, so that the ceiling and walls were disfigured by unsightly spots and stains and streaks. The question of shingling was tacitly felt to be outside the feminine domain, but as there were five women to one man in the church membership, the feminine domain was frequently obliged to extend its limits into the hitherto unknown. Matters of tarring and waterproofing were discussed in and out of season, and the very school-children imbibed knowledge concerning lapping, over-lapping, and cross-lapping, and first and second quality of cedar shingles. Miss Lobelia Brewster,

who had a rooted distrust of anything done by mere man, created strife by remarking that she could have stopped the leak in the belfry tower with her red flannel petticoat better than the Milltown man with his new-fangled rubber sheeting, and that the last shingling could have been more thoroughly done by a “female infant babe”; whereupon the person criticized retorted that he wished Miss Lobelia Brewster had a few infant babes to “put on the job he'd like to see 'em try.” Meantime several male members of the congregation, who at one time or another had sat on the roof during the hottest of the dog-days to see that shingling operations were conscientiously and skillfully performed, were very pessimistic as to any satisfactory result ever being achieved.

“The angle of the roof--what they call the 'pitch'--they say that that's always been wrong,” announced the secretary of the Dorcas in a business session.

“Is it that kind of pitch that the Bible says you can't touch without being defiled? If not, I vote that we unshingle the roof and alter the pitch!” This proposal came from a sister named Maria Sharp, who had valiantly offered the year before to move the smoky chimney with her own hands, if the “menfolks” would n't.

But though the incendiary suggestion of altering the pitch was received with applause at the moment, subsequent study of the situation proved that such a proceeding was entirely beyond the modest means of the society. Then there arose an ingenious and militant carpenter in a neighboring village, who asserted that he would shingle the meeting-house roof for such and such a sum, and agree to drink every drop of water that would leak in afterward. This was felt by all parties to be a promise attended by extraordinary risks, but it was accepted nevertheless, Miss Lobelia Brewster remarking that the rash carpenter, being already married, could not marry a Dorcas anyway, and even if he died, he was not a resident of Edgewood, and therefore could be more easily spared, and that it would be rather exciting, just for a change, to see a man drink himself to death with rain-water. The expected tragedy never occurred, however, and the inspired shingler fulfilled his promise to the letter, so that before many months the Dorcas Society proceeded, with incredible exertion, to earn more money, and the interior of the church was neatly painted and made as fresh as a rose. With no smoke, no rain, no snow nor melting ice to defile it, the good old landmark that had been pointing its finger Heavenward for over a century would now be clean and fragrant for years to come, and the weary sisters leaned back in their respective rocking-chairs and drew deep breaths of satisfaction.

These breaths continued to be drawn throughout an unusually arduous haying season; until, in fact, a visitor from a neighboring city was heard to remark that the Tory Hill Meeting-House would be one of the best preserved and pleasantest churches in the whole State of Maine, if

only it were suitably carpeted.

This thought had secretly occurred to many a Dorcas in her hours of pie-making, preserving, or cradle-rocking, but had been promptly extinguished as flagrantly extravagant and altogether impossible. Now that it had been openly mentioned, the contagion of the idea spread, and in a month every sort of honest machinery for the increase of funds had been set in motion: harvest suppers, pie sociables, old folks' concerts, apron sales, and, as a last resort, a subscription paper, for the church floor measured hundreds of square yards, and the carpet committee announced that a good ingrain could not be purchased, even with the church discount, for less than ninety-seven cents a yard.

The Dorcases took out their pencils, and when they multiplied the surface of the floor by the price of the carpet per yard, each Dorcas attaining a result entirely different from all the others, there was a shriek of dismay, especially from the secretary, who had included in her mathematical operation certain figures in her possession representing the cubical contents of the church and the offending pitch of the roof, thereby obtaining a product that would have dismayed a Croesus. Time sped and efforts increased, but the Dorcases were at length obliged to clip the wings of their desire and content themselves with carpeting the pulpit and pulpit steps, the choir, and the two aisles, leaving the floor in the pews until some future year.

How the women cut and contrived and matched that hardly-bought red ingrain carpet, in the short December afternoons that ensued after its purchase; so that, having failed to be ready for Thanksgiving, it could be finished for the Christmas festivities!

They were sewing in the church, and as the last stitches were being taken, Maria Sharp suddenly ejaculated in her impulsive fashion:--

"Would n't it have been just perfect if we could have had the pews repainted before we laid the new carpet!"

"It would, indeed," the president answered; "but it will take us all winter to pay for the present improvements, without any thought of fresh paint. If only we had a few more men-folks to help along!"

"Or else none at all!" was Lobelia Brewster's suggestion. "It's havin' so few that keeps us all stirred up. If there wa'n't any anywheres, we'd have women deacons and carpenters and painters, and get along first rate; for somehow the supply o' women always holds out, same as it does with caterpillars an' flies an' grasshoppers!"

Everybody laughed, although Maria Sharp asserted that she for one was not willing to be called a caterpillar simply because there were too many women in the universe.

"I never noticed before how shabby and scarred and dirty the pews are," said the minister's wife, as she looked at them reflectively.

"I've been thinking all the afternoon of the story about the poor old woman and the lily," and Nancy Wentworth's clear voice broke into the discussion. "Do you remember some one gave her a stalk of Easter lilies and she set them in a glass pitcher on the kitchen table? After looking at them for a few minutes, she got up from her chair and washed the pitcher until the glass shone. Sitting down again, she glanced at the little window. It would never do; she had forgotten how dusty and blurred it was, and she took her cloth and burnished the panes. Then she scoured the table, then the floor, then blackened the stove before she sat down to her knitting. And of course the lily had done it all, just by showing, in its whiteness, how grimy everything else was."

The minister's wife, who had been in Edgewood only a few months, looked admiringly at Nancy's bright face, wondering that five-and-thirty years of life, including ten of school-teaching, had done so little to mar its serenity.

"The lily story is as true as the gospel!" she exclaimed, "and I can see how one thing has led you to another in making the church comfortable. But my husband says that two coats of paint on the pews would cost a considerable sum."

"How about cleaning them? I don't believe they've had a good hard washing since the flood." The suggestion came from Deacon Miller's wife to the president.

"They can't even be scrubbed for less than fifteen or twenty dollars, for I thought of that and asked Mrs. Simpson yesterday, and she said twenty cents a pew was the cheapest she could do it for."

"We've done everything else," said Nancy Wentworth, with a twitch of her thread; "why don't we scrub the pews? There's nothing in the Orthodox creed to forbid, is there?"

"Speakin' o' creeds," and here old Mrs. Sargent paused in her work, "Elder Ransom from Acreville stopped with us last night, an' he tells me they recite the Euthanasian Creed every few Sundays in the Episcopal Church. I did n't want him to know how ignorant I was, but I looked up the word in the dictionary. It means easy death, and I can't see any sense in that, though it's a terrible long creed, the Elder says, an' if it's any longer 'n ourn, I should think anybody _might_ easy die learnin' it!"

"I think the word is Athanasian," ventured the minister's wife.

“Elder Ransom's always plumb full o' doctrine,” asserted Miss Brewster, pursuing the subject. “For my part, I'm glad he preferred Acreville to our place. He was so busy bein' a minister, he never got round to bein' a human creeter. When he used to come to sociables and picnics, always lookin' kind o' like the potato blight, I used to think how complete he'd be if he had a foldin' pulpit under his coat-tails; they make foldin' beds nowadays, an' I s'pose they could make foldin' pulpits, if there was a call.”

“Land sakes, I hope there won't be!” exclaimed Mrs. Sargent. “An' the Elder never said much of anything either, though he was always preachin'! Now your husband, Mis' Baxter, always has plenty to say after you think he's all through. There's water in his well when the others is all dry!”

“But how about the pews?” interrupted Mrs. Burbank. “I think Nancy's idea is splendid, and I want to see it carried out. We might make it a picnic, bring our luncheons, and work all together; let every woman in the congregation come and scrub her own pew.”

“Some are too old, others live at too great a distance,” and the minister's wife sighed a little; “indeed, most of those who once owned the pews or sat in them seem to be dead, or gone away to live in busier places.”

“I've no patience with 'em, gallivantin' over the earth,” and here Lobelia rose and shook the carpet threads from her lap. “I should n't want to live in a livelier place than Edgewood, seem's though! We wash and hang out Mondays, iron Tuesdays, cook Wednesdays, clean house and mend Thursdays and Fridays, bake Saturdays, and go to meetin' Sundays. I don't hardly see how they can do any more'n that in Chicago!”

“Never mind if we have lost members!” said the indomitable Mrs. Burbank. “The members we still have left must work all the harder. We'll each clean our own pew, then take a few of our neighbors', and then hire Mrs. Simpson to do the wainscoting and floor. Can we scrub Friday and lay the carpet Saturday? My husband and Deacon Miller can help us at the end of the week. All in favor manifest it by the usual sign. Contrary-minded? It is a vote.”

There never were any contrary-minded when Mrs. Jere Burbank was in the chair. Public sentiment in Edgewood was swayed by the Dorcas Society, but Mrs. Burbank swayed the Dorcas themselves as the wind sways the wheat.

II. The old meeting-house wore an animated aspect when the eventful

Friday came, a cold, brilliant, sparkling December day, with good sleighing, and with energy in every breath that swept over the dazzling snowfields. The sexton had built a fire in the furnace on the way to his morning work--a fire so economically contrived that it would last exactly the four or five necessary hours, and not a second more. At eleven o'clock all the pillars of the society had assembled, having finished their own household work and laid out on their respective kitchen tables comfortable luncheons for the men of the family, if they were fortunate enough to number any among their luxuries. Water was heated upon oil-stoves set about here and there, and there was a brave array of scrubbing-brushes, cloths, soap, and even sand and soda, for it had been decided and manifested-by-the-usual-sign-and-no-contrary-minded-and-it-was--a-vote that the dirt was to come off, whether the paint came with it or not. Each of the fifteen women present selected a block of seats, preferably one in which her own was situated, and all fell busily to work.

"There is nobody here to clean the right-wing pews," said Nancy Wentworth, "so I will take those for my share."

"You're not making a very wise choice, Nancy," and the minister's wife smiled as she spoke. "The infant class of the Sunday-School sits there, you know, and I expect the paint has had extra wear and tear. Families don't seem to occupy those pews regularly nowadays."

"I can remember when every seat in the whole church was filled, wings an' all," mused Mrs. Sargent, wringing out her washcloth in a reminiscent mood. "The one in front o' you, Nancy, was always called the 'deef pew' in the old times, and all the folks that was hard o' hearin' used to congregate there."

"The next pew has n't been occupied since I came here," said the minister's wife.

"No," answered Mrs. Sargent, glad of any opportunity to retail neighborhood news. "'Squire Bean's folks have moved to Portland to be with the married daughter. Somebody has to stay with her, and her husband won't. The 'Squire ain't a strong man, and he's most too old to go to meetin' now. The youngest son just died in New York, so I hear."

"What ailed him?" inquired Maria Sharp.

"I guess he was completely wore out takin' care of his health," returned Mrs. Sargent. "He had a splendid constitution from a boy, but he was always afraid it would n't last him. The seat back o' 'Squire Bean's is the old Peabody pew--ain't that the Peabody pew you're scrubbin', Nancy?"

"I believe so," Nancy answered, never pausing in her labors. "It's so

long since anybody sat there, it's hard to remember.”

“It is the Peabodys', I know it, because the aisle runs right up facin' it. I can see old Deacon Peabody settin' in this end same as if 't was yesterday.”

“He had died before Jere and I came back here to live,” said Mrs. Burbank. “The first I remember, Justin Peabody sat in the end seat; the sister that died, next, and in the corner, against the wall, Mrs. Peabody, with a crape shawl and a palmleaf fan. They were a handsome family. You used to sit with them sometimes, Nancy; Esther was great friends with you.”

“Yes, she was,” Nancy replied, lifting the tattered cushion from its place and brushing it; “and I with her. What is the use of scrubbing and carpeting, when there are only twenty pew-cushions and six hassocks in the whole church, and most of them ragged? How can I ever mend this?”

“I should n't trouble myself to darn other people's cushions!” This unchristian sentiment came in Mrs. Miller's ringing tones from the rear of the church.

“I don't know why,” argued Maria Sharp. “I'm going to mend my Aunt Achsa's cushion, and we haven't spoken for years; but hers is the next pew to mine, and I'm going to have my part of the church look decent, even if she is too stingy to do her share. Besides, there are n't any Peabodys left to do their own darning, and Nancy was friends with Esther.”

“Yes, it's nothing more than right,” Nancy replied, with a note of relief in her voice, “considering Esther.”

“Though he don't belong to the scrubbin' sex, there is one Peabody alive, as you know, if you stop to think, Maria; for Justin's alive, and livin' out West somewheres. At least, he's as much alive as ever he was; he was as good as dead when he was twenty-one, but his mother was always too soft-hearted to bury him.”

There was considerable laughter over this sally of the outspoken Mrs. Sargent, whose keen wit was the delight of the neighborhood.

“I know he's alive and doing business in Detroit, for I got his address a week or ten days ago, and wrote, asking him if he'd like to give a couple of dollars toward repairing the old church.”

Everybody looked at Mrs. Burbank with interest.

“Has n't he answered?” asked Maria Sharp. Nancy Wentworth held her breath, turned her face to the wall, and silently wiped the paint of the

wainscoting. The blood that had rushed into her cheeks at Mrs. Sargent's jeering reference to Justin Peabody still lingered there for any one who ran to read, but fortunately nobody ran; they were too busy scrubbing.

"Not yet. Folks don't hurry about answering when you ask them for a contribution," replied the president, with a cynicism common to persons who collect funds for charitable purposes. "George Wickham sent me twenty-five cents from Denver. When I wrote him a receipt, I said thank you same as Aunt Polly did when the neighbors brought her a piece of beef: 'Ever so much obleeged, but don't forget me when you come to kill a pig.'--Now, Mrs. Baxter, you shan't clean James Bruce's pew, or what was his before he turned Second Advent. I'll do that myself, for he used to be in my Sunday-School class."

"He's the backbone o' that congregation now," asserted Mrs. Sargent, "and they say he's goin' to marry Mrs. Sam Peters, who sings in their choir, as soon as his year is up. They make a perfect fool of him in that church."

"You can't make a fool of a man that nature ain't begun with," argued Miss Brewster. "Jim Bruce never was very strong-minded, but I declare it seems to me that when men lose their wives, they lose their wits! I was sure Jim would marry Hannah Thompson that keeps house for him. I suspected she was lookin' out for a life job when she hired out with him."

"Hannah Thompson may keep Jim's house, but she'll never keep Jim, that's certain!" affirmed the president; "and I can't see that Mrs. Peters will better herself much."

"I don't blame her, for one!" came in no uncertain tones from the left-wing pews, and the Widow Buzzell rose from her knees and approached the group by the pulpit. "If there's anything duller than cookin' three meals a day for yourself, and settin' down and eatin' 'em by yourself, and then gettin' up and clearin' 'em away after yourself, I'd like to know it! I should n't want any good-lookin', pleasant-spoken man to offer himself to me without he expected to be snapped up, that's all! But if you've made out to get one husband in York County, you can thank the Lord and not expect any more favors. I used to think Tom was poor comp'ny and complain I could n't have any conversation with him, but land, I could talk at him, and there's considerable comfort in that. And I could pick up after him! Now every room in my house is clean, and every closet and bureau drawer, too; I can't start drawin' in another rug, for I've got all the rugs I can step foot on. I dried so many apples last year I shan't need to cut up any this season. My jelly and preserves ain't out, and there I am; and there most of us are, in this village, without a man to take steps for and trot 'round after! There's just three husbands among the fifteen women scrubbin' here now, and the rest of us is all old maids and widders. No wonder the men-folks die, or

move away, like Justin Peabody; a place with such a mess o' women-folks ain't healthy to live in, whatever Lobelia Brewster may say."

III. Justin Peabody had once faithfully struggled with the practical difficulties of life in Edgewood, or so he had thought, in those old days of which Nancy Wentworth was thinking when she wiped the paint of the Peabody pew. Work in the mills did not attract him; he had no capital to invest in a stock of goods for store-keeping; school-teaching offered him only a pittance; there remained then only the farm, if he were to stay at home and keep his mother company.

"Justin don't seem to take no holt of things," said the neighbors.

"Good Heavens!" It seemed to him that there were no things to take hold of! That was his first thought; later he grew to think that the trouble all lay in himself, and both thoughts bred weakness.

The farm had somehow supported the family in the old Deacon's time, but Justin seemed unable to coax a competence from the soil. He could, and did, rise early and work late; till the earth, sow crops; but he could not make the rain fall nor the sun shine at the times he needed them, and the elements, however much they might seem to favor his neighbors, seldom smiled on his enterprises. The crows liked Justin's corn better than any other in Edgewood. It had a richness peculiar to itself, a quality that appealed to the most jaded palate, so that it was really worth while to fly over a mile of intervening fields and pay it the delicate compliment of preference.

Justin could explain the attitude of caterpillars, worms, grasshoppers, and potato-bugs toward him only by assuming that he attracted them as the magnet in the toy boxes attracts the miniature fishes.

"Land o' liberty! look at 'em congregate!" ejaculated Jabe Slocum, when he was called in for consultation. "Now if you'd gone in for breedin' insecs, you could be as proud as Cuffy an' exhibit 'em at the County Fair! They'd give yer prizes for size an' numbers an' speed, I guess! Why, say, they're real crowded for room--the plants ain't give 'em enough leaves to roost on! Have you tried 'Bug Death'?"

"It acts like a tonic on them," said Justin gloomily.

"Sho! you don't say so! Now mine can't abide the sight nor smell of it. What 'bout Paris green?"

"They thrive on it; it's as good as an appetizer."

“Well,” said Jabe Slocum, revolving the quid of tobacco in his mouth reflectively, “the bug that ain't got no objection to p'ison is a bug that's got ways o' thinkin' an' feelin' an' reasonin' that I ain't able to cope with! P'r'aps it's all a leadin' o' Providence. Mebbe it shows you'd ought to quit farmin' crops an' take to raisin' live stock!”

Justin did just that, as a matter of fact, a year or two later; but stock that has within itself the power of being “live” has also rare qualification for being dead when occasion suits, and it generally did suit Justin's stock. It proved prone not only to all the general diseases that cattle-flesh is heir to, but was capable even of suicide. At least, it is true that two valuable Jersey calves, tied to stakes on the hillside, had flung themselves violently down the bank and strangled themselves with their own ropes in a manner which seemed to show that they found no pleasure in existence, at all events on the Peabody farm.

These were some of the little tragedies that had sickened young Justin Peabody with life in Edgewood, and Nancy Wentworth, even then, realized some of them and sympathized without speaking, in a girl's poor, helpless way.

Mrs. Simpson had washed the floor in the right wing of the church and Nancy had cleaned all the paint. Now she sat in the old Peabody pew darning the forlorn, faded cushion with gray carpet-thread; thread as gray as her own life.

The scrubbing-party had moved to its labors in a far corner of the church, and two of the women were beginning preparations for the basket luncheons. Nancy's needle was no busier than her memory. Long years ago she had often sat in the Peabody pew, sometimes at first as a girl of sixteen when asked by Esther, and then, on coming home from school at eighteen, “finished,” she had been invited now and again by Mrs. Peabody herself, on those Sundays when her own invalid mother had not attended service.

Those were wonderful Sundays--Sundays of quiet, trembling peace and maiden joy.

Justin sat beside her, and she had been sure then, but had long since grown to doubt the evidence of her senses, that he, too, vibrated with pleasure at the nearness. Was there not a summer morning when his hand touched her white lace mitt as they held the hymn-book together, and the lines of the

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace,

became blurred on the page and melted into something indistinguishable for a full minute or two afterward? Were there not looks, and looks,

and looks? Or had she some misleading trick of vision in those days? Justin's dark, handsome profile rose before her: the level brows and fine lashes; the well-cut nose and lovable mouth--the Peabody mouth and chin, somewhat too sweet and pliant for strength, perhaps. Then the eyes turned to hers in the old way, just for a fleeting glance, as they had so often done at prayer-meeting, or sociable, or Sunday service. Was it not a man's heart she had seen in them? And oh, if she could only be sure that her own woman's heart had not looked out from hers, drawn from its maiden shelter in spite of all her wish to keep it hidden!

Then followed two dreary years of indecision and suspense, when Justin's eyes met hers less freely; when his looks were always gloomy and anxious; when affairs at the Peabody farm grew worse and worse; when his mother followed her husband, the old Deacon, and her daughter Esther to the burying-ground in the churchyard. Then the end of all things came, the end of the world for Nancy: Justin's departure for the West in a very frenzy of discouragement over the narrowness and limitation and injustice of his lot; over the rockiness and barrenness and unkindness of the New England soil; over the general bitterness of fate and the "bludgeonings of chance."

He was a failure, born of a family of failures. If the world owed him a living, he had yet to find the method by which it could be earned. All this he thought and uttered, and much more of the same sort. In these days of humbled pride self was paramount, though it was a self he despised. There was no time for love. Who was he for a girl to lean upon?--he who could not stand erect himself!

He bade a stiff goodbye to his neighbors, and to Nancy he vouchsafed little more. A handshake, with no thrill of love in it such as might have furnished her palm, at least, some memories to dwell upon; a few stilted words of leave-taking; a halting, meaningless sentence or two about his "botch" of life--then he walked away from the Wentworth doorstep. But halfway down the garden path, where the shriveled hollyhocks stood like sentinels, did a wave of something different sweep over him--a wave of the boyish, irresponsible past when his heart had wings and could fly without fear to its mate--a wave of the past that was rushing through Nancy's mind, wellnigh burying her in its bitter-sweet waters. For he lifted his head, and suddenly retracing his steps, he came toward her, and, taking her hand again, said forlornly: "You 'll see me back when my luck turns, Nancy."

Nancy knew that the words might mean little or much, according to the manner in which they were uttered, but to her hurt pride and sore, shamed woman-instinct, they were a promise, simply because there was a choking sound in Justin's voice and tears in Justin's eyes. "You 'll see me back when my luck turns, Nancy"; this was the phrase upon which she had lived for more than ten years. Nancy had once heard the old parson say, ages ago, that the whole purpose of life was the growth of the

soul; that we eat, sleep, clothe ourselves, work, love, all to give the soul another day, month, year, in which to develop. She used to wonder if her soul could be growing in the monotonous round of her dull duties and her duller pleasures. She did not confess it even to herself; nevertheless she knew that she worked, ate, slept, to live until Justin's luck turned. Her love had lain in her heart a bird without a song, year after year. Her mother had dwelt by her side and never guessed; her father, too; and both were dead. The neighbors also, lynx-eyed and curious, had never suspected. If she had suffered, no one in Edgewood was any the wiser, for the maiden heart is not commonly worn on the sleeve in New England. If she had been openly pledged to Justin Peabody, she could have waited twice ten years with a decent show of self-respect, for long engagements were viewed rather as a matter of course in that neighborhood. The endless months had gone on since that gray November day when Justin had said goodbye. It had been just before Thanksgiving, and she went to church with an aching and ungrateful heart. The parson read from the eighth chapter of St. Matthew, a most unexpected selection for that holiday. "If you can't find anything else to be thankful for," he cried, "go home and be thankful you are not a leper!"

Nancy took the drastic counsel away from the church with her, and it was many a year before she could manage to add to this slender store anything to increase her gratitude for mercies given, though all the time she was outwardly busy, cheerful, and helpful.

Justin had once come back to Edgewood, and it was the bitterest drop in her cup of bitterness that she was spending that winter in Berwick (where, so the neighbors told him, she was a great favorite in society, and was receiving much attention from gentlemen), so that she had never heard of his visit until the spring had come again. Parted friends did not keep up with one another's affairs by means of epistolary communication, in those days, in Edgewood; it was not the custom. Spoken words were difficult enough to Justin Peabody, and written words were quite impossible, especially if they were to be used to define his half-conscious desires and his fluctuations of will, or to recount his disappointments and discouragements and mistakes.

IV. It was Saturday afternoon, the 24th of December, and the weary sisters of the Dorcas band rose from their bruised knees and removed their little stores of carpet-tacks from their mouths. This was a feminine custom of long standing, and as no village dressmaker had ever died of pins in the digestive organs, so were no symptoms of carpet-tacks ever discovered in any Dorcas, living or dead. Men wondered at the habit and reviled it, but stood confounded in the presence of its indubitable harmlessness.

The red ingrain carpet was indeed very warm, beautiful, and comforting to the eye, and the sisters were suitably grateful to Providence, and devoutly thankful to themselves, that they had been enabled to buy, sew, and lay so many yards of it. But as they stood looking at their completed task, it was cruelly true that there was much left to do.

The aisles had been painted dark brown on each side of the red strips leading from the doors to the pulpit, but the rest of the church floor was "a thing of shreds and patches." Each member of the carpet committee had paid (as a matter of pride, however ill she could afford it) three dollars and sixty-seven cents for sufficient carpet to lay in her own pew; but these brilliant spots of conscientious effort only made the stretches of bare, unpainted floor more evident. And that was not all. Traces of former spasmodic and individual efforts desecrated the present ideals. The doctor's pew had a pink-and-blue Brussels on it; the lawyer's, striped stair-carpeting; the Browns from Deerwander sported straw matting and were not abashed; while the Greens, the Whites, the Blacks, and the Grays displayed floor coverings as dissimilar as their names.

"I never noticed it before!" exclaimed Maria Sharp, "but it ain't Christian, that floor! it's heathenish and ungodly!"

"For mercy's sake, don't swear, Maria," said Mrs. Miller nervously. "We've done our best, and let's hope that folks will look up and not down. It is n't as if they were going to set in the chandelier; they'll have something else to think about when Nancy gets her hemlock branches and white carnations in the pulpit vases. This morning my Abner picked off two pinks from a plant I've been nursing in my dining-room for weeks, trying to make it bloom for Christmas. I slapped his hands good, and it's been haunting me ever since to think I had to correct him the day before Christmas.--Come, Lobelia, we must be hurrying!"

"One thing comforts me," exclaimed the Widow Buzzell, as she took her hammer and tacks preparatory to leaving; "and that is that the Methodist meetin'-house ain't got any carpet at all."

"Mrs. Buzzell, Mrs. Buzzell!" interrupted the minister's wife, with a smile that took the sting from her speech. "It will be like punishing little Abner Miller; if we think those thoughts on Christmas Eve, we shall surely be haunted afterward."

"And anyway," interjected Maria Sharp, who always saved the situation, "you just wait and see if the Methodists don't say they'd rather have no carpet at all than have one that don't go all over the floor. I know 'em!" and she put on her hood and blanket-shawl as she gave one last fond look at the improvements.

"I'm going home to get my supper, and come back afterward to lay the carpet in my pew; my beans and brown bread will be just right by now, and perhaps it will rest me a little; besides, I must feed 'Zekiel."

As Nancy Wentworth spoke, she sat in a corner of her own modest rear seat, looking a little pale and tired. Her waving dark hair had loosened and fallen over her cheeks, and her eyes gleamed from under it wistfully. Nowadays Nancy's eyes never had the sparkle of gazing into the future, but always the liquid softness that comes from looking backward.

"The church will be real cold by then, Nancy," objected Mrs. Burbank.--"Good-night, Mrs. Baxter."

"Oh, no! I shall be back by half-past six, and I shall not work long. Do you know what I believe I'll do, Mrs. Burbank, just through the holidays? Christmas and New Year's both coming on Sunday this year, there'll be a great many out to church, not counting the strangers that'll come to the special service tomorrow. Instead of putting down my own pew carpet that'll never be noticed here in the back, I'll lay it in the old Peabody pew, for the red aisle-strip leads straight up to it; the ministers always go up that side, and it does look forlorn."

"That's so! And all the more because my pew, that's exactly opposite in the left wing, is new carpeted and cushioned," replied the president. "I think it's real generous of you, Nancy, because the Riverboro folks, knowing that you're a member of the carpet committee, will be sure to notice, and think it's queer you have n't made an effort to carpet your own pew."

"Never mind!" smiled Nancy wearily. "Riverboro folks never go to bed on Saturday nights without wondering what Edgewood is thinking about them!"

The minister's wife stood at her window watching Nancy as she passed the parsonage.

"How wasted! How wasted!" she sighed. "Going home to eat her lonely supper and feed 'Zekiel.... I can bear it for the others, but not for Nancy.... Now she has lighted her lamp,... now she has put fresh pine on the fire, for new smoke comes from the chimney. Why should I sit down and serve my dear husband, and Nancy feed 'Zekiel?"

There was some truth in Mrs. Baxter's feeling. Mrs. Buzzell, for instance, had three sons; Maria Sharp was absorbed in her lame father and her Sunday-School work; and Lobelia Brewster would not have considered matrimony a blessing, even under the most favorable conditions. But Nancy was framed and planned for other things, and 'Zekiel was an insufficient channel for her soft, womanly sympathy and her bright activity of mind and body.

'Zekiel had lost his tail in a mowing-machine; 'Zekiel had the asthma, and the immersion of his nose in milk made him sneeze, so he was wont to slip his paw in and out of the dish and lick it patiently for five minutes together. Nancy often watched him pityingly, giving him kind and gentle words to sustain his fainting spirit, but tonight she paid no heed to him, although he sneezed violently to attract her attention.

She had put her supper on the lighted table by the kitchen window and was pouring out her cup of tea, when a boy rapped at the door. "Here's a paper and a letter, Miss Wentworth," he said. "It's the second this week, and they think over to the store that that Berwick widower must be settin' up and takin' notice!"

She had indeed received a letter the day before, an unsigned communication, consisting only of the words,--

Second Epistle of John. Verse x2.

She had taken her Bible to look out the reference and found it to be:--

Having many tilings to write unto you, I would not write with paper and ink: but I trust to come unto you, and speak face to face, that our joy may be full.

The envelope was postmarked New York, and she smiled, thinking that Mrs. Emerson, a charming lady who had spent the summer in Edgewood, and had sung with her in the village choir, was coming back, as she had promised, to have a sleigh ride and see Edgewood in its winter dress. Nancy had almost forgotten the first letter in the excitements of her busy day, and now here was another, from Boston this time. She opened the envelope and found again only a simple sentence, printed, not written. (Lest she should guess the hand, she wondered?)

Second Epistle of John. Verse 5.--

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

Was it Mrs. Emerson? Could it be--any one else? Was it? No, it might have been, years ago; but not now; not now!--And yet; he was always so different from other people; and once, in church, he had handed her the hymn-book with his finger pointing to a certain verse.

She always fancied that her secret fidelity of heart rose from the fact that Justin Peabody was "different." From the hour of their first acquaintance, she was ever comparing him with his companions, and always to his advantage. So long as a woman finds all men very much alike (as Lobelia Brewster did, save that she allowed some to be worse!), she is

in no danger. But the moment in which she perceives and discriminates subtle differences, marveling that there can be two opinions about a man's superiority, that moment the miracle has happened.

And now I beseech thee, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another.

No, it could not be from Justin. She drank her tea, played with her beans abstractedly, and nibbled her slice of steaming brown bread.

Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee.

No, not a new one; twelve, fifteen years old, that commandment!

That we love one another.

Who was speaking? Who had written these words? The first letter sounded just like Mrs. Emerson, who had said she was a very poor correspondent, but that she should just “drop down” on Nancy one of these days; but this second letter never came from Mrs. Emerson.--Well, there would be an explanation some time; a pleasant one; one to smile over, and tell 'Zekiel and repeat to the neighbors; but not an unexpected, sacred, beautiful explanation, such a one as the heart of a woman could imagine, if she were young enough and happy enough to hope. She washed her cup and plate; replaced the uneaten beans in the brown pot, and put them away with the round loaf, folded the cloth (Lobelia Brewster said Nancy always “set out her meals as if she was entertainin' company from Portland”), closed the stove dampers, carried the lighted lamp to a safe corner shelf, and lifted 'Zekiel to his cushion on the high-backed rocker, doing all with the nice precision of long habit. Then she wrapped herself warmly, and locking the lonely little house behind her, set out to finish her work in the church.

V. At this precise moment Justin Peabody was eating his own beans and brown bread (articles of diet of which his Detroit landlady was lamentably ignorant) at the new tavern, not far from the meeting-house.

It would not be fair to him to say that Mrs. Burbank's letter had brought him back to Edgewood, but it had certainly accelerated his steps.

For the first six years after Justin Peabody left home, he had drifted about from place to place, saving every possible dollar of his uncertain earnings in the conscious hope that he could go back to New England and ask Nancy Wentworth to marry him. The West was prosperous and

progressive, but how he yearned, in idle moments, for the grimmer and more sterile soil that had given him birth!

Then came what seemed to him a brilliant chance for a lucky turn of his savings, and he invested them in an enterprise which, wonderfully as it promised, failed within six months and left him penniless. At that moment he definitely gave up all hope, and for the next few years he put Nancy as far as possible out of his mind, in the full belief that he was acting an honorable part in refusing to drag her into his tangled and fruitless way of life. If she ever did care for him,--and he could not be sure, she was always so shy,--she must have outgrown the feeling long since, and be living happily, or at least contentedly, in her own way. He was glad in spite of himself when he heard that she had never married; but at least he had n't it on his conscience that he had kept her single!

On the 17th of December, Justin, his business day over, was walking toward the dreary house in which he ate and slept. As he turned the corner, he heard one woman say to another, as they watched a man stumbling sorrowfully down the street: "Going home will be the worst of all for him--to find nobody there!" That was what going home had meant for him these ten years, but he afterward felt it strange that this thought should have struck him so forcibly on that particular day. Entering the boarding-house, he found Mrs. Burbank's letter with its Edgewood postmark on the hall table, and took it up to his room. He kindled a little fire in the air-tight stove, watching the flame creep from shavings to kindlings, from kindlings to small pine, and from small pine to the round, hardwood sticks; then when the result seemed certain, he closed the stove door and sat down to read the letter. Whereupon all manner of strange things happened in his head and heart and flesh and spirit as he sat there alone, his hands in his pockets, his feet braced against the legs of the stove.

It was a cold winter night, and the snow and sleet beat against the windows. He looked about the ugly room: at the washstand with its square of oilcloth in front and its detestable bowl and pitcher; at the rigors of his white iron bedstead, with the valley in the middle of the lumpy mattress and the darns in the rumpled pillowcases; at the dull photographs of the landlady's hideous husband and children enshrined on the mantelshelf; looked at the abomination of desolation surrounding him until his soul sickened and cried out like a child's for something more like home. It was as if a spring thaw had melted his ice-bound heart, and on the crest of a wave it was drifting out into the milder waters of some unknown sea. He could have laid his head in the kind lap of a woman and cried: "Comfort me! Give me companionship or I die!"

The wind howled in the chimney and rattled the loose window-sashes; the snow, freezing as it fell, dashed against the glass with hard, cutting little blows; at least, that is the way in which the wind and snow

flattered themselves they were making existence disagreeable to Justin Peabody when he read the letter; but never were elements more mistaken.

It was a June Sunday in the boarding-house bedroom; and for that matter it was not the boarding-house bedroom at all: it was the old Orthodox church on Tory Hill in Edgewood. The windows were wide open, and the smell of the purple clover and the humming of the bees were drifting into the sweet, wide spaces within. Justin was sitting in the end of the Peabody pew, and Nancy Wentworth was beside him; Nancy, cool and restful in her white dress; dark-haired Nancy under the shadow of her shirred muslin hat.

Rise, my soul, and stretch thy wings,
Thy better portion trace.

The melodeon gave the tune, and Nancy and he stood to sing, taking the book between them. His hand touched hers, and as the music of the hymn rose and fell, the future unrolled itself before his eyes: a future in which Nancy was his wedded wife; and the happy years stretched on and on in front of them until there was a row of little heads in the old Peabody pew, and mother and father could look proudly along the line at the young things they were bringing into the house of the Lord.

The recalling of that vision worked like magic in Justin's blood. His soul rose and stretched its wings and "traced its better portion" vividly, as he sprang to his feet and walked up and down the bedroom floor. He would get a few days' leave and go back to Edgewood for Christmas, to join, with all the old neighbors, in the service at the meetinghouse; and in pursuance of this resolve, he shook his fist in the face of the landlady's husband on the mantelpiece and dared him to prevent.

He had a salary of fifty dollars a month, with some very slight prospect of an increase after January. He did not see how two persons could eat, and drink, and lodge, and dress on it in Detroit, but he proposed to give Nancy Wentworth the refusal of that magnificent future, that brilliant and tempting offer. He had exactly one hundred dollars in the bank, and sixty or seventy of them would be spent in the journeys, counting two happy, blessed fares back from Edgewood to Detroit; and if he paid only his own fare back, he would throw the price of the other into the pond behind the Wentworth house. He would drop another ten dollars into the plate on Christmas Day toward the repairs on the church; if he starved, he would do that. He was a failure. Everything his hand touched turned to naught. He looked himself full in the face, recognizing his weakness, and in this supremest moment of recognition he was a stronger man than he had been an hour before. His drooping shoulders had straightened; the restless look had gone from his eyes; his somber face had something of repose in it, the repose of a settled purpose. He was a failure, but perhaps if he took the risks (and

if Nancy would take them--but that was the trouble, women were so unselfish, they were always willing to take risks, and one ought not to let them!), perhaps he might do better in trying to make a living for two than he had in working for himself alone. He would go home, tell Nancy that he was an unlucky good-for-naught, and ask her if she would try her hand at making him over.

VI. These were the reasons that had brought Justin Peabody to Edgewood on the Saturday afternoon before Christmas, and had taken him to the new tavern on Tory Hill, near the meeting-house.

Nobody recognized him at the station or noticed him at the tavern, and after his supper he put on his overcoat and started out for a walk, aimlessly hoping that he might meet a friend, or failing that, intending to call on some of his old neighbors, with the view of hearing the village news and securing some information which might help him to decide when he had better lay himself and his misfortunes at Nancy Wentworth's feet. They were pretty feet! He remembered that fact well enough under the magical influence of familiar sights and sounds and odors. He was restless, miserable, anxious, homesick--not for Detroit, but for some heretofore unimagined good; yet, like Bunyan's shepherd boy in the Valley of humiliation, he carried "the herb called Heartsease in his bosom," for he was at last loving consciously.

How white the old church looked, and how green the blinds! It must have been painted very lately: that meant that the parish was fairly prosperous. There were new shutters in the belfry tower, too; he remembered the former open space and the rusty bell, and he liked the change. Did the chimney use to be in that corner? No; but his father had always said it would have drawn better if it had been put there in the beginning. New shingles within a year: that was evident to a practiced eye. He wondered if anything had been done to the inside of the building, but he must wait until the morrow to see, for, of course, the doors would be locked. No; the one at the right side was ajar. He opened it softly and stepped into the tiny square entry that he recalled so well--the one through which the Sunday-School children ran out to the steps from their catechism, apparently enjoying the sunshine after a spell of orthodoxy; the little entry where the village girls congregated while waiting for the last bell to ring--they made a soft blur of pink and blue and buff, a little flutter of curls and braids and fans and sun-shades, in his mind's eye, as he closed the outer door behind him and gently opened the inner one. The church was flooded with moon-light and snowlight, and there was one lamp burning at the back of the pulpit; a candle, too, on the pulpit steps. There was the tip-tap-tip of a tack-hammer going on in a distant corner. Was somebody hanging Christmas garlands? The new red carpet attracted his notice, and as he grew

accustomed to the dim light, it carried his eye along the aisle he had trod so many years of Sundays, to the old familiar pew. The sound of the hammer ceased, and a woman rose from her knees. A stranger was doing for the family honor what he ought himself to have done. The woman turned to shake her skirt, and it was Nancy Wentworth. He might have known it. Women were always faithful; they always remembered old land-marks, old days, old friends, old duties. His father and mother and Esther were all gone; who but dear Nancy would have made the old Peabody pew right and tidy for the Christmas festival? Bless her kind, womanly heart!

She looked just the same to him as when he last saw her. Mercifully he seemed to have held in remembrance all these years not so much her youthful bloom as her general qualities of mind and heart: her cheeriness, her spirit, her unflagging zeal, her bright womanliness. Her gray dress was turned up in front over a crimson moreen petticoat. She had on a cozy jacket, a fur turban of some sort with a red breast in it, and her cheeks were flushed from exertion. "Sweet records, and promises as sweet," had always met in Nancy's face, and either he had forgotten how pretty she was, or else she had absolutely grown prettier during his absence.

Nancy would have chosen the supreme moment of meeting very differently, but she might well have chosen worse. She unpinned her skirt and brushed the threads off, smoothed the pew cushions carefully, and took a last stitch in the ragged hassock. She then lifted the Bible and the hymn-book from the rack, and putting down a bit of flannel on the pulpit steps, took a flatiron from an oil-stove, and opening the ancient books, pressed out the well-thumbed leaves one by one with infinite care. After replacing the volumes in their accustomed place, she first extinguished the flame of her stove, which she tucked out of sight, and then blew out the lamp and the candle. The church was still light enough for objects to be seen in a shadowy way, like the objects in a dream, and Justin did not realize that he was a man in the flesh, looking at a woman; spying, it might be, upon her privacy. He was one part of a dream and she another, and he stood as if waiting, and fearing, to be awakened.

Nancy, having done all, came out of the pew, and standing in the aisle, looked back at the scene of her labors with pride and content. And as she looked, some desire to stay a little longer in the dear old place must have come over her, or some dread of going back to her lonely cottage, for she sat down in Justin's corner of the pew with folded hands, her eyes fixed dreamily on the pulpit and her ears hearing:--

Not as though I wrote a new commandment unto thee, but that which we had from the beginning.

Justin's grasp on the latch tightened as he prepared to close the door and leave the place, but his instinct did not warn him quickly enough, after all, for, obeying some uncontrollable impulse, Nancy suddenly fell

on her knees in the pew and buried her face in the cushions. The dream broke, and in an instant Justin was a man--worse than that, he was an eavesdropper, ashamed of his unsuspected presence. He felt himself standing, with covered head and feet shod, in the holy temple of a woman's heart.

But his involuntary irreverence brought abundant grace with it. The glimpse and the revelation wrought their miracles silently and irresistibly, not by the slow processes of growth which Nature demands for her enterprises, but with the sudden swiftness of the spirit. In an instant changes had taken place in Justin's soul which his so-called "experiencing religion" twenty-five years back had been powerless to effect. He had indeed been baptized then, but the recording angel could have borne witness that this second baptism fructified the first, and became the real herald of the new birth and the new creature.

VII. Justin Peabody silently closed the inner door, and stood in the entry with his head bent and his heart in a whirl until he should hear Nancy rise to her feet. He must take this Heaven-sent chance of telling her all, but how do it without alarming her?

A moment, and her step sounded in the stillness of the empty church.

Obedying the first impulse, he passed through the outer door, and standing on the step, knocked once, twice, three times; then, opening it a little and speaking through the chink, he called, "Is Miss Nancy Wentworth here?"

"I'm here!" in a moment came Nancy's answer; and then, with a little wondering tremor in her voice, as if a hint of the truth had already dawned: "What's wanted?"

"You're wanted, Nancy, wanted badly, by Justin Peabody, come back from the West."

The door opened wide, and Justin faced Nancy standing halfway down the aisle, her eyes brilliant, her lips parted. A week ago Justin's apparition confronting her in the empty meeting-house after nightfall, even had she been prepared for it as now, by his voice, would have terrified her beyond measure. Now it seemed almost natural and inevitable. She had spent these last days in the church where both of them had been young and happy together; the two letters had brought him vividly to mind, and her labor in the old Peabody pew had been one long excursion into the past in which he was the most prominent and the best-loved figure.

"I said I'd come back to you when my luck turned, Nancy."

These were so precisely the words she expected him to say, should she ever see him again face to face, that for an additional moment they but heightened her sense of unreality.

"Well, the luck hasn't turned, after all, but I could n't wait any longer. Have you given a thought to me all these years, Nancy?"

"More than one, Justin." For the very look upon his face, the tenderness of his voice, the attitude of his body, outran his words and told her what he had come home to say, told her that her years of waiting were over at last.

"You ought to despise me for coming back again with only myself and my empty hands to offer you."

How easy it was to speak his heart out in this dim and quiet place! How tongue-tied he would have been, sitting on the black hair-cloth sofa in the Wentworth parlor and gazing at the open soapstone stove!

"Oh, men are such fools!" cried Nancy, smiles and tears struggling together in her speech, as she sat down suddenly in her own pew and put her hands over her face.

"They are," agreed Justin humbly; "but I've never stopped loving you, whenever I've had time for thinking or loving. And I was n't sure that you really cared anything about me; and how could I have asked you when I had n't a dollar in the world?"

"There are other things to give a woman besides dollars, Justin."

"Are there? Well, you shall have them all, every one of them, Nancy, if you can make up your mind to do without the dollars; for dollars seem to be just what I can't manage."

Her hand was in his by this time, and they were sitting side by side, in the cushionless, carpetless Wentworth pew. The door stood open; the winter moon shone in upon them. That it was beginning to grow cold in the church passed unnoticed. The grasp of the woman's hand seemed to give the man new hope and courage, and Justin's warm, confiding, pleading pressure brought balm to Nancy, balm and healing for the wounds her pride had suffered; joy, too, half-conscious still, that her life need not be lived to the end in unfruitful solitude. She had waited, "as some gray lake lies, full and smooth, awaiting the star below the twilight."

Justin Peabody might have been no other woman's star, but he was Nancy's! "Just you sitting beside me here makes me feel as if I'd been

asleep or dead all these years, and just born over again," said Justin. "I've led a respectable, hard-working, honest life, Nancy," he continued, "and I don't owe any man a cent; the trouble is that no man owes me one. I've got enough money to pay two fares back to Detroit on Monday, although I was terribly afraid you would n't let me do it. It'll need a good deal of thinking and planning, Nancy, for we shall be very poor."

Nancy had been storing up fidelity and affection deep, deep in the hive of her heart all these years, and now the honey of her helpfulness stood ready to be gathered.

"Could I keep hens in Detroit?" she asked. "I can always make them pay."

"Hens--in three rooms, Nancy?"

Her face fell. "And no yard?"

"No yard."

A moment's pause, and then the smile came. "Oh, well, I've had yards and hens for thirty-five years. Doing without them will be a change. I can take in sewing."

"No, you can't, Nancy. I need your backbone and wits and pluck and ingenuity, but if I can't ask you to sit with your hands folded for the rest of your life, as I'd like to, you shan't use them for other people. You're marrying me to make a man of me, but I'm not marrying you to make you a drudge."

His voice rang clear and true in the silence, and Nancy's heart vibrated at the sound.

"O Justin, Justin! there's something wrong somewhere," she whispered, "but we'll find it out together, you and I, and make it right. You're not like a failure. You don't even look poor, Justin; there is n't a man in Edgewood to compare with you, or I should be washing his dishes and darning his stockings this minute. And I am not a pauper! There'll be the rent of my little house and a carload of my furniture, so you can put the three-room idea out of your mind, and your firm will offer you a larger salary when you tell them you have a wife to take care of. Oh, I see it all, and it is as easy and bright and happy as can be!"

Justin put his arm around her and drew her close, with such a throb of gratitude for her belief and trust that it moved him almost to tears. There was a long pause; then he said:--

"Now I shall call for you tomorrow morning after the last bell has stopped ringing, and we will walk up the aisle together and sit in the

old Peabody pew. We shall be a nine days' wonder anyway, but this will be equal to an announcement, especially if you take my arm. We don't either of us like to be stared at, but this will show without a word what we think of each other and what we've promised to be to each other, and it's the only thing that will make me feel sure of you and settled in my mind after all these mistaken years. Have you got the courage, Nancy?"

"I should n't wonder! I guess if I've had courage enough to wait for you, I've got courage enough to walk up the aisle with you and marry you besides!" said Nancy.--"Now it is too late for us to stay here any longer, and you must see me only as far as my gate, for perhaps you have n't forgotten yet how interested the Brewsters are in their neighbors."

They stood at the little Wentworth gate for a moment, hand close clasped in hand. The night was clear, the air was cold and sparkling, but with nothing of bitterness in it, the sky was steely blue, and the evening star glowed and burned like a tiny sun. Nancy remembered the shepherd's song she had taught the Sunday-School children, and repeated softly:--

For I my sheep was watching
Beneath the silent skies,
When sudden, far to eastward,
I saw a star arise;
Then all the peaceful heavens
With sweetest music rang,
And glory, glory, glory!
The happy angels sang.

So I this night am joyful,
Though I can scarce tell why,
It seemeth me that glory
Hath met us very nigh;
And we, though poor and humble,
Have part in heavenly plan,
For, born tonight, the Prince of Peace
Shall rule the heart of man.

Justin's heart melted within him like wax to the woman's vision and the woman's touch.

"Oh, Nancy, Nancy!" he whispered. "If I had brought my bad luck to you long, long ago, would you have taken me then, and have I lost years of such happiness as this?"

"There are some things it is not best for a man to be certain about," said Nancy, with a wise smile and a last goodnight.

VIII. Ring out, sweet bells

Ring out, sweet bells,
O'er woods and dells
Your lovely strains repeat,
While happy throngs
With joyous songs
Each accent gladly greet.

Christmas morning in the old Tory Hill Meeting-House was felt by all of the persons who were present in that particular year to be a most exciting and memorable occasion.

The old sexton quite outdid himself, for although he had rung the bell for more than thirty years, he had never felt greater pride or joy in his task. Was not his son John home for Christmas, and John's wife, and a grand-child newly named Nathaniel for himself? Were there not spareribs and turkeys and cranberries and mince pies on the pantry shelves, and barrels of rosy Baldwins in the cellar and bottles of mother's root beer just waiting to give a holiday pop? The bell itself forgot its age and the suspicion of a crack that dulled its voice on a damp day, and, inspired by the bright, frosty air, the sexton's inspiring pull, and the Christmas spirit, gave out nothing but joyous tones.

Ding-dong! _Ding-dong_! It fired the ambitions of star scholars about to recite hymns and sing solos. It thrilled little girls expecting dolls before night. It excited beyond bearing dozens of little boys being buttoned into refractory overcoats. _Ding-dong_! _Ding-dong_! Mothers' fingers trembled when they heard it, and mothers' voices cried: "If that is the second bell, the children will never be ready in time! Where are the overshoes? Where are the mittens? Hurry, Jack! Hurry, Jennie!" _Ding-dong_! _Ding-dong_! "Where's Sally's muff? Where's father's fur cap? Is the sleigh at the door? Are the hot soapstones in? Have all of you your money for the contribution box?" _Ding-dong_! _Ding-dong_! It was a blithe bell, a sweet, true bell, a holy bell, and to Justin pacing his tavern room, as to Nancy trembling in her maiden chamber, it rang a Christmas message:--

Awake, glad heart! Arise and sing;
It is the birthday of thy King!

The congregation filled every seat in the old meeting-house. As Maria Sharp had prophesied, there was one ill-natured spinster from a rival village who declared that the church floor looked like Joseph's coat laid out smooth; but in the general chorus of admiration, approval, and goodwill, this envious speech, though repeated from mouth to mouth, left

no sting.

Another item of interest long recalled was the fact that on that august and unapproachable day the pulpit vases stood erect and empty, though Nancy Wentworth had filled them every Sunday since any one could remember. This instance, though felt at the time to be of mysterious significance if the cause were ever revealed, paled into nothingness when, after the ringing of the last bell, Nancy Wentworth walked up the aisle on Justin Peabody's arm, and they took their seats side by side in the old family pew.

("And consid'able close, too, though there was plenty o' room!")

("And no one that I ever heard of so much as suspicioned that they had ever kept company!")

("And do you s'pose she knew Justin was expected back when she scrubbed his pew a-Friday? ")

("And this explains the empty pulpit vases! ")

("And I always said that Nancy would make a real handsome couple if she ever got anybody to couple with!")

During the unexpected and solemn procession of the two up the aisle the soprano of the village choir stopped short in the middle of the Doxology, and the three other voices carried it to the end without any treble. Also, among those present there were some who could not remember afterward the precise petitions wafted upward in the opening prayer.

And could it be explained otherwise than by cheerfully acknowledging the bounty of an overruling Providence that Nancy Wentworth should have had a new winter dress for the first time in five years--a winter dress of dark brown cloth to match her beaver muff and victorine? The existence of this toilette had been known and discussed in Edgewood for a month past, and it was thought to be nothing more than a proper token of respect from a member of the carpet committee to the general magnificence of the church on the occasion of its reopening after repairs. Indeed, you could have identified every member of the Dorcas Society that Sunday morning by the freshness of her apparel. The brown dress, then, was generally expected; but why the white cashmere waist with collar and cuffs of point lace, devised only and suitable only for the minister's wedding, where it first saw the light?

"The white waist can only be explained as showing distinct hope!" whispered the minister's wife during the reading of the church notices.

"To me it shows more than hope; I am very sure that Nancy would never take any wear out of that lace for hope; it means certainty!" answered

Maria, who was always strong in the prophetic line.

Justin's identity had dawned upon most of the congregation by sermon time. A stranger to all but one or two at first, his presence in the Peabody pew brought his face and figure back, little by little, to the minds of the old parishioners.

When the contribution plate was passed, the sexton always began at the right-wing pews, as all the sextons before him had done for a hundred years. Every eye in the church was already turned upon Justin and Nancy, and it was with almost a gasp that those in the vicinity saw a ten-dollar bill fall in the plate. The sexton reeled, or, if that is too intemperate a word for a pillar of the church, the good man tottered, but caught hold of the pew rail with one hand, and, putting the thumb of his other over the bill, proceeded quickly to the next pew, lest the stranger should think better of his gift, or demand change, as had occasionally been done in the olden time.

Nancy never fluttered an eyelash, but sat quietly by Justin's side with her bosom rising and falling under the beaver fur and her cold hands clasped tight in the little brown muff. Far from grudging this appreciable part of their slender resources, she thrilled with pride to see Justin's offering fall in the plate.

Justin was too absorbed in his own thoughts to notice anything, but his munificent contribution had a most unexpected effect upon his reputation, after all; for on that day, and on many another later one, when his sudden marriage and departure with Nancy Wentworth were under discussion, the neighbors said to one another:--“Justin must be making money fast out West! He put ten dollars in the contribution plate a-Sunday, and paid the minister ten more next day for marryin' him to Nancy; so the Peabody luck has turned at last!”--which as a matter of fact, it had.

“And all the time,” said the chairman of the carpet committee to the treasurer of the Dorcas Society--“all the time, little as she realized it, Nancy was laying the carpet in her own pew. Now she's married to Justin, she'll be the makin' of him, or I miss my guess. You can't do a thing with men-folks without they're right alongside where you can keep your eye and hand on 'em. Justin's handsome and good and stiddy; all he needs is some nice woman to put starch into him. The Edgewood Peabodys never had a mite o' stiffenin' in 'em,--limp as dishrags, every blessed one! Nancy Wentworth fairly rustles with starch. Justin had n't been engaged to her but a few hours when they walked up the aisle together, but did you notice the way he carried his head? I declare I thought 't would fall off behind! I should n't wonder a mite but they prospered and come back every summer to set in the Old Peabody Pew.”

